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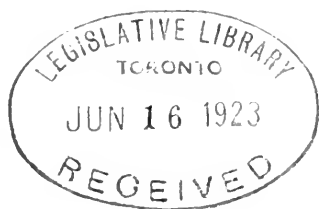
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## SAILOR TOWN DAYS

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

SONGS AND CHANTIES

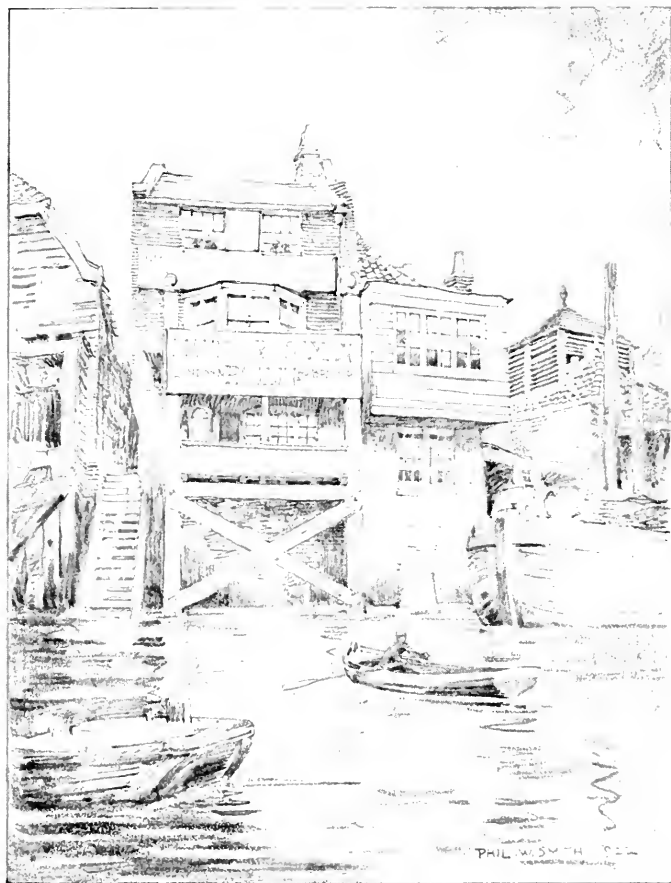
SHIPS AND FOLKS

ROVINGS

RHYMES OF THE RED ENSIGN

SEA SONGS AND BALLADS





THE "PROSPECT OF WHITBY"



33411

# SAILOR TOWN DAYS

BY  
C. FOX SMITH

WITH SIX ILLUSTRATIONS BY  
PHIL. W. SMITH

METHUEN & CO. LTD.  
36 ESSEX STREET W.C.  
LONDON

5545

*First Published in 1923*

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

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NOTE—Some part of the material included in this volume has appeared in the columns of the "Daily Chronicle," the "Nautical Magazine," the "Daily Mail," and "Country Life," to whose Editors, as well as to the Proprietors of "Punch," due acknowledgment is hereby made.

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# SAILOR TOWN DAYS

## INTRODUCTORY

Dock-walloping as a Pastime—The Lure of Dockland—  
Neptune's Shore Province—Ship-chandlers and Tattooists—Junk  
Stores and Smells

**T**O the true lover of the sea whom either age or infirmity or any other disability of chance or circumstance compels to pass the greater part of his days ashore, there can be no hobby so engrossing, no pastime so fascinating, as that occupation which may be conveniently summed up in the term "dock-walloping." That expressive phrase—borrowed for the occasion from the ever-expressive vocabulary of the merchant seaman—must be taken in this instance in a strictly amateur sense, not in its primary meaning of the strenuous duties of the lumper or longshoreman, nor in that secondary significance in which its associations are of the most harrowing—indicating, as it does, the compulsory, painful, and depressing peregrinations of the sailorman looking for a berth.

Sailors, as every one knows who knows anything about them, abhor walking above all things—unless it be getting wet on dry land. It is one of the pet delusions of people who know nothing of seafaring men that they positively enjoy getting wet ; whereas you never see a captain go ashore without

his umbrella ; and—at the other end of the social scale—go and look at a crowd waiting to sign on some wet day, and you will behold the very epitome of draggled depression ! And your genuine sailor-man never walks a step if he can help it. He will blithely undertake to ride or drive anything—camel, elephant, mule, velocipede, or what not ; but walk—never !

That sailor of tradition—I believe he dates as far back as Homer—who avowed his intention of taking an oar over his shoulder and walking inland until he should find some spot whose inhabitants did not know the use of it, would not, I think, get very far upon his quest. Perhaps along a leafy lane or two—up one hill and down another—and in he would turn with a sigh at the door of some wayside inn, and sit down with his oar beside him, spinning his very best yarns for the benefit of the open-mouthed natives.

That much is certain ; and it is no less certain that—like most legendary personages—he really existed at some time in the flesh, whether in Greece or Tyre or Sidon or ancient Punt. For, however little he may carry it into practice, there is no more universal delusion than that of the seafaring man that he is by nature specially designed for a farmer. He seldom, if ever, becomes one, and if he does he generally goes back to the sea in the long run ; though I remember a case of a Devon sailor-farmer who defeated the whole countryside in a ploughing contest, having affixed a compass to his plough and steered his course thereby.

What is the reason of it, this strange hankering



of the sailor for the soil ? Is it merely a manifestation of the truth of the poet's words :

We look before and after  
And pine for what is not !

Or is it the sheer contrast between the fickle, mobile, treacherous element on which he lives so great a part of his days and the solid, stationary qualities of the earth ? Does he weary at times of that furrow which never endures, drive he never so deeply ; desiring, however idly, the heavy clods of the enduring soil ?

I knew a captain once, over on the Pacific coast, whose great hobby was (of all things in the world) gardening. He grew roses far away in his Liverpool home—one could see it, somehow, in the mind's eye, that trim, red-brick villa in the Liverpool suburb. It was a grand soil for roses. They grew splendidly—splendidly. They were the envy of the neighbourhood. But—well, somehow, it was a funny thing, he had never had the luck to be at home when they were in bloom. It was funny, when you came to think of it—wasn't it?—but that was how it had always happened. One year it was Christmas, with a foot of snow on the ground ; another, it was spring, and the buds just showing ; another, and it was autumn, with only a few shrivelled relics remaining to speak of the brief glory that had passed with summer. He had never seen them ; but he believed they were a show when they were fully out. His wife assured him that people stopped going along the street to stare at them and smell them. Well, well, next year—next year, perhaps . . . but next year brought the War.

I wonder how he went on, that decent, plain common-sense man who cherished so unexpected a dream-garden in his heart. Did he ever see it, his rose-garden in June? or did he carry it with him to his life's end, that vision of fragrant perfection such as no mortal garden ever knew? . . . Wallowing in the cold fogs of the North Pacific, reeking in the steamy heat of the monsoon in the China seas, the thought of that far-off perfection had warmed his heart with a vision of beauty. . . . Perhaps he was lucky—luckier than he knew.

\*            \*            \*            \*            \*

The lure of dockland is akin to, yet subtly different from, the charm of the sea. The latter is, in a sense, impersonal, almost abstract; the former is bound up with its human aspect—with ships and the men who sail in them, who are, moreover, in continual warfare with the very element they live by. It has the fascination and the romance which belong to hard, perilous, wandering lives. It appeals to most of the simple natural instincts—wonder, curiosity, adventure—which are a part of the equipment of most healthy human beings.

To your true lover of dockland there is no land quite like it. True, one must first discover it to find its charm. It is not always beautiful on the surface. More often than not its beauty must be sought for through vistas of mean streets of an incredible ugliness—through a network of railway sidings frequented by unexpected engines, among tall and grimy warehouses and factories belching forth smoke and evil odours, amid the deafening din of dry-docks and ship-repairers' yards, and the

ear-splitting racket of riveters at work. That is one side of the picture. On the other, there are places where one comes as it were right into dockland . . . ocean wharves lying dreaming by the Pacific . . . behind them, the dusk ranges crowned with snow . . . before, the full tide flushing crimson with sunset, and the sky red to the zenith with afterglow . . . a smell of forest fires in the air . . . and a sailing vessel at the lumber mill, her yards gilded by the last of the sunset, and the little pink clouds like a flock of rosy parakeets tangled in her rigging.

Dockland, strictly speaking, is of no country—or rather it is of all countries. It is, in certain essentials, the same the world over; and that in spite of the fact that every province of it has its own strongly marked characteristics, sometimes racial, sometimes climatic, sometimes commercial. Always there is that same fringe of shops which in one way or another make their livelihood out of the seafaring community, the same saloons and bars and restaurants and cocoa-rooms, the same ship-chandlers with their pleasant smells of ropes and canvas, their stocks of shining brasses and bright bunting, the places where they sell sea-boots and oilskins and sailors' beds, or exchange them for the gaudy parrots and ship-models and lumps of coral the seamen bring in from their voyages; and the junk-stores with all sorts of imaginable and unimaginable rubbish—rusty blocks, dried fishes like bladders, old books, old boots, old battered sea-chests.

Always, too, there is the same passing crowd of men of all races—white men, yellow men, black

men: the phlegmatic Anglo-Saxon, the dark or red Anglo-Celt, the tall, lean "blue-nose" from Nova Scotia, the hard-case, lantern-jawed down-easter, like a figure out of one of Herman Melville's novels—those wonderful pictures of sea-life which, after half a century of comparative neglect, are at present enjoying one of those whimsical vogues which are the greatest irony of literary fame. Then there are dark Lascars with their look of inscrutable homesickness and melancholy, and Chinese stokers in blue cotton jackets and trousers and heelless shoes, padding along duck-file and chattering away ceaselessly without ever turning their heads; and Japanese clerks in American store clothes and aggressive lumpy-toed boots. There are all the breeds of Latins whom the sailor classes broadly as Dagoes—French, Portuguese, Mulattoes, and black-avised Chilenos from the South American nitrate ports. Scandinavians, too, of all shades; Norwegians, Scouwegians, and Danes, with here and there a squat, fur-capped Finn from Abo, looking very unlike the possessor of that gift of witchcraft with which sea-tradition credits him.

\* \* \* \* \*

You might always know when you have entered the borders of that queer, amphibious country which lies as it were between land and sea, even were there no visible signs of actual ships to inform you of it. For the sea sets its sign manual unmistakably upon its border kingdoms in many ways—on its inhabitants, on its atmosphere, and last, but by no means least, on the business that is done there.

Sailor Town the world over is a realm apart. Under whatever flag it may happen to be—to whatever temporal sovereign it may owe its external allegiance—in spirit it is of the kingdom of Neptune : a shoregoing Neptune, it is true, stretching his legs in a pub and having a gay time among the girls—but Neptune just the same.

The shops of Sailor Town have ever a certain cosmopolitan likeness, so that at every turn you are seeing things which recall as in a flash other things the width of the world away—under other skies, and in most ways totally different, yet in some strange, undefinable way alike. And this, when one considers it, is not wonderful, since the population for which these world-divided communities cater is the same—shifting, changing, in a continual state of flux, yet always the same, just as the tide which laps against the wharves is still the same, though the salt drops which compose it are different day by day.

There are, of course, always the same official buildings, such as shipping offices, harbour offices, and so forth, with the usual cosmopolitan groups gathered about them of crews waiting to sign on or to be paid off, and clean little houses of dock-masters and the like, with their white flagstaffs before them. By the way, that word "cosmopolitan" reminds me of a big, burly, taciturn lump of a man, reeking vilely of the whale oil his little coasting craft carried, who once told me rather amazingly, in answer to a casual inquiry as to his nationality, that he was a cosmopolitan. I dare say he was, but it was an unusual thing for a sailor to be. As a general thing, the sailor is intensely

national—the genuine shellback, that is, the sail-trained seaman, now fast passing away with the ships and the life he knew. He seeks out in foreign ports the resorts of his fellow-countrymen, and scorns any nearer approach to a foreign language than a sort of Chinook jargon, which he uses impartially wherever he goes. He regards the customs and languages of foreign countries with a fine scorn, not unmixed with suspicion. He does not understand them; he refuses to learn their speech, just as he refuses to provide against contingencies by learning to swim. He seldom wanders far from his ship, but, like Melville's Nantucketer, "for years he knows not the land; so that, when he comes to it at last, it smells like another world, more strangely than the moon would to an Englishman."

The sailor, despite his ambition to be a farmer, cherishes deep within his being an inbred distrust of the land. He dislikes to lose touch with his ship, his floating home. Cosmopolitan in his life, his speech, his habits, he is yet the most insular of all men. Perhaps it is an instinctive, an inherited, suspicion, handed down from the days when to be cut off from his boats meant the end of all things. His knowledge of the countries he visits is bounded, but for occasional excursions, by the confines of Sailor Town. However many new lands he discovered and named in the centuries gone by, he never explored them, leaving that, as a rule, to gentlemen adventurers of sorts, who were generally mighty sick on the way thither.

Yet perhaps one need not go very far back to find a reason for his distrust of the land and its

ways. How it has fleeced him, robbed him, duped him, stripped him, taken his hard-earned pay and shanghaied him into the foc's'les of hell-ships; taken his trust in womankind, his very soul itself! What a display it has offered him of all that is worst in humanity—cupidity, treachery, greed in men; vice and infidelity and lust in women! The sailor made a thousand fortunes, blazed the trail to a hundred harbours; and his fellow-men gave him scant pay, hard living and a nameless grave. Unlettered, yet among the world's finest craftsmen; laying, for a mere pittance of money, for weevily bread and stinking meat, the foundations of a thousand mighty fortunes, the British merchant seaman of the nineteenth century stands up rugged, tremendous, pathetic among the great figures of his time.

I remember once talking to the engineer of a coasting steamer—a fat, domestic, kindly soul, who kept canaries in some unspeakably stuffy and oily smelling little cubby-hole he inhabited in the bowels of the ship. He had spent a good many years of his life on the Liverpool-Lisbon run, and as he was an intelligent sort of man and tolerably well-informed in a self-educated fashion, as engineers of small ships often are, I thought he might be able to give me some interesting sidelights on Lisbon.

“Lisbon—oh, nothing of a place!” he pronounced weightily. “Why, the trams”—he paused—“the trams there, they run straight up the steepest hill you ever saw . . . like a house-side . . . straight up! Why, all the time I kept thinking we'd be running down backwards . . . I only went once . . . dangerous, I call it! Can't trust those Dagoes,

you know. No—you take it from me—Lisbon's rotten ! ”

Think of it ! For years had that amazing man plodded to and fro across the Bay, muffling up his canaries at night—if he kept canaries then, which he probably did, for he was of that type of man whose habits are all lifelong—attending anxiously to his engines, and never going ashore because he didn't consider the trams were safe ! I don't believe he ever went ashore there again. I am certain he never went a biscuit-toss from his ship. Very likely he spent his spare time sitting on the hatch-coaming, as he did when he was talking to me, surveying Lisbon from afar with a look as of a benevolent grocer slightly on the defensive. It is strange how one remembers things. I can see that man now—his short, fat thighs and slightly pendulous paunch, his rather infantile face with its grey whiskers, his bald brow lightly wrinkled and glistening with sweat like a mirror in damp weather. A man like a benevolent grocer in one of those small corner shops which competition and multiple shops are slowly but surely nudging out of existence.

I believe that little coaster had occasion to run for it from the attentions of Fritz during the Great War ; it was during that wonderful summer that preceded it, and in Falmouth Harbour, to be exact, when the news of Sarajevo had just come in, that he told me about Lisbon and its terrible trams. She must have looked remarkably like an old lady running away from an unexpected mad bull. I fancy I see my engineer friend pottering about among his cranks and cylinders, his forehead shiny with perspiration and wrinkled just a little, murmur-



ing, "Dangerous, I call it," in tones of mild expostulation—not a heroic figure, perhaps, but a remarkably reliable one.

\* \* \* \* \*

But to return once again to Sailor Town. There are, of course, all the shops which minister to the needs of the sailor afloat, and, though there are honourable exceptions, do it, in nine cases out of ten, very indifferently indeed. The very nature of their trade is a temptation, no doubt, to the lower types of commercial minds. Their customers, they know full well, will in all probability—to borrow a phrase from that anonymous aphorism which confronts one with such maddening persistency from business men's desks—"Pass that way but once"; therefore they are meet to be cheated and imposed upon with leaky oilskins and bad blankets and rotten gear of every conceivable kind, even down to clasp-knives with flaws in them. If there be some special corner of a marine inferno reserved for offenders deserving particular attention, surely such dishonest tradesmen should occupy it—and would if the heartfelt curses of poor sailormen, soaked to the skin in the icy seas of the Horn, could take them thither.

Then there are those establishments which cater for the wants of the ship herself—where they sell bunting and paint and anti-fouling composition and what not—the ship-chandlers, with their delightful array of new rope in clean-smelling coils, and gleaming brass lamps in gimbals. One would think that it must be a good honest trade, that of the ship-chandler, though I believe it has its tricks

like all other trades. And why, by the way, a ship-chandler? A tallow-chandler one can understand ; but in what way a ship's needs should be specially associated with candles it is difficult to surmise.

Then, of course, there are the hosts of establishments concerned with the mariner's creature comforts—the cocoa rooms (what is the connexion between cocoa and the sea, other than the fact that it is cheap and feeding and hot ?) ; there are dining rooms in endless variety, Occidental, Panama, and so on ; and there are London's good pull-ups for carmen, and coffee stalls like the " Star of the East," which looks so depressingly unoriental on a cold March day, with the cold rain driving and the dock entrance churned into yellow mud, shrinking into the curve of the wall by the West India Dock gate like a Lascar in cold weather.

And there are the photographers' shops, with stiff likenesses of young men in brass-bound coats and peaked caps, gazing stonily into space ; and tattooists' rooms with fearful and wonderful devices displayed to tempt the vain, regardless of personal suffering, to have portrayed on their persons snakes and dragons and monsters of the deep. Why is tattooing still so universal a practice among seafaring men ? It has long survived most of the sailor's personal adornments—the gaudy neckerchiefs and the gold or more often brass ear-rings which used to be worn by so many, and are still occasionally to be seen gleaming among the greasy curls of some Dago seaman.

Tattooing is probably to a great extent " swank." It was originally only done in Eastern ports, and to sport tattoo marks showed the genuine " Sou'

Spanier." Sometimes such decorations have embarrassing possibilities. I know a retired sailorman in a country village, a member of one of the most godly Dissenting families in the countryside, who displays on his hairy forearm as secular-looking a young person as could well be conceived in the scantiest imaginable of petticoats. I often wonder what his chapel-going family said to him when he first came home from foreign parts with that scandalous female indelibly engraved upon his person.

Sentiment might on occasion have something to do with the practice. To carry the name of your sweetheart within a true lover's knot somewhere about your anatomy was a touching demonstration of eternal fidelity, and might also serve as a reminder when absence wore thin the threads of tender recollection.

But, as a rule, there seems little doubt that the sailor's tattoo marks had a more serious import. They were meant either as charms, or, in the last resort, for the same purpose as the identification disk in time of war, in case of being lost at sea ; so that, for instance, the Roman Catholic sailor who carried a crucifix tattooed on his body might be fairly sure of receiving a Catholic burial if he were cast ashore in any Christian country.

\* \* \* \* \*

Last, but not least, there are the junk stores—those fascinating mixtures of all sorts of romantic rubbish : dried devil fishes that look so disconcertingly like bleached skulls in a dim light, lumps of coral plant, ship models, wooden cases filled with designs made of tiny pink and white and rainbow-

coloured tropic shells, old jars such as a jinn might lurk in, and bottles of dusk-red Indian pottery, old sea-boots, and literal junk of every sort and description. I remember one such junk store, over on the Pacific coast. I discovered it one magical rose-flushed evening between daylight and dusk—such a junk store, with such promise of interesting finds in its dark recesses.

There were some yellow old ivories in one heap, and a pile of old technical nautical books in another, and an old sailor's fiddle that may have squeaked to the shuffle of bare feet under many a tropic moon. . . . But I never could find it again. I suppose the shop had changed hands, in some quite usual, matter-of-fact way, or been pulled down, or had a new front put on to it. They do these transformations very suddenly in those parts. But its disappearance left an impression as magical and mysterious as my first impression of it: as if it were something less real than, and as transient as, the small rosy clouds of that vanished sunset.

There is the dock smell, too, made up of various things, pleasant and unpleasant—such as Stockholm tar, and bilge water, and ship's paint, and warm whiffs of oil from engine-rooms, and smells of food from cooks' galleys . . . the universal dock smell to which every port adds its own particular ingredient, according to the particular trade or trades it is concerned with; such as, to take one or two instances, the tremendous aroma of rum, like the ghost of a whole shipload of Treasure Island pirates, which pervades one part of the West India Docks in the Port of London, and the smell of nitrates which stands for the queer, dry, dusty coast-towns

of Chile and Peru, with their anchorages open to the "Northers"; and the mixed smell of lumber and whale oil which means the North Pacific.

And always, dominating everything, there are the fluttering ensigns and house-flags, the clustered masts and funnels of the ships. Great and small, ugly or beautiful, deep sea or coastwise, all have their portion of the sea's inheritance of wonder. Perhaps it is a big liner with her tiers of decks and slender wireless; or a modern cargo-boat bristling with derricks, all for use and nothing for beauty; or some old "has-been" of the days of sail, her long masts and spars cut down, but still showing even in her decay the faded semblance of her bygone beauty; or a powerful ocean-going fore-and-after, with open bulwarks where the seas may wash to and fro when she is wallowing deep laden in the Cape Horn seas.



## PART I

### DAYS IN LONDON

#### CHAPTER I

A Dock-haunter's Paradise—The Borders of Dockland—The Chain Locker—A Vanished Chantry—Ivory, Apes, and Peacocks—Ratcliff Highway—Labour-in-Vain Street—Execution Dock

**T**HE Port of London, taking it "by and large," is the dock-haunter's paradise.

Every port has its own special characteristic—has, too, its own particular period with which it seems to have been specially associated. There are the liner ports, like Southampton; and there are grain and emigrant and cotton ports, like Liverpool; and coal ports where everything is black, and china clay ports where everything is white, and salt ports, and fish ports, and frozen-meat ports; and ports of call, like Falmouth and Queenstown (which we are now to accustom ourselves to call "Cobh"); and lumber ports where the windjammers still come in with wonder and mystery from the sea.

But it is given to this Port of London to combine something of them all. There, under the grey, smoke-veiled London skies, on the bosom of London's ancient river, shall be found the ships, the cargoes, and the sailor-folk of every nation under heaven.

Here, it is a smart passenger liner for India or "the Colonies," as the sailor still calls Australia, all white paint and shining brasses, with wide decks where the passengers may lounge under their awnings in the Red Sea heat. There it is an ugly, slab-sided freighter disgorging from her holds copra or Lima beans, or matting-swathed bales, or tea chests, or wool from the Riverina, or maize, or bundles of thin veneer, or glossy linseed from South America. Again, it is some bluff old tub of a wooden barque from the Baltic, a Noah's Arkish sort of affair, with a pump-windmill forward, generally a dog, and very often a woman's apron somewhere about ; or some "lost lady of old time," slender and beautiful even in her decay, dreaming to herself in some quiet corner of one of the older basins where no one ever seems to come, of that tall and beautiful sisterhood passed for ever from the world of waters.

They come from dusty little Spanish towns between the Andes and the sea, from pandanus-thatched native towns of Malaya standing up on their leaning stilts like some queer kind of water insect, from lonely lumber-wharves on the Pacific coast, where the sawdust deadens every footstep, and the shrill note of the saws cuts like a knife the drowsy quiet of the summer afternoons, from old Dutch Java towns of marble and melancholy, from the Baltic, the Pacific, the Persian Gulf, the Gulf of Siam, and where the surf roars over the sandy bars at the mouths of African rivers. They have been loaded by the very latest thing in dock machinery, at giant elevators and lonely little wharves, by blond Finns and chattering Japanese,



and swarms of chanting, sweating, betel-chewing Klings. And the river of London knows them all—knows them as he knew their forerunners centuries ago.

It is this continuity of maritime tradition which is one of the most significant points about the Port of London: this connected history leading right back to the beginnings of British ocean trade. You come up against it at every turn. As the world grew, so London grew. So long as her trade remained largely continental, the Pool and its immediate vicinity sufficed to serve her needs. Blackwall and Deptford, until the eighteenth century, were mainly devoted to the Naval service; though Deptford in Greenland Dock boasts what claims to be the oldest of all the existing docks.

All the dock systems on the north side of the river are connected by long tradition with the East and South—with the hot, tropical seas that wash the shores of India, China, and Ceylon, with South Africa and the Antipodes. Surrey Docks, on the other hand, are especially linked with the northern waters—with the Baltic, the North Atlantic, and the cold oceans that lap the southern and northern ice-packs. And the invisible threads which join them are not the work of a few years; they have existed for centuries. There are Canadian liners sailing to-day from the very spot whence valiant men put forth in their cockleshells three centuries ago to the shores of the newly discovered continent. There are ships unloading Baltic lumber hard by the place where the ships of Willoughby and Chancellor and Edge fitted out for the frozen seas in the seventeenth century. There are ships

sailing to the Arctic seas from the same waters that saw the sailing of the Hudson Bay Company's first fleet to found a northern empire yet undreamed of but by a few great dreamers like that royal visionary, Prince Rupert—that prince of whom popular tradition has made a mere noisy cavalier, a roystering commander of horse. Many a time must he have longed to sail with the merchant adventurers far from the unclean atmosphere of the Court he loathed ; and it may be that here on Thames-side he loved to meet old shipmates of his West Indian days, and talk with them of perils run by sea and land in the brave days of youth.

\* \* \* \* \*

You begin to breathe a more or less nautical atmosphere when you get as far east as the Port of London " Authority's " building and the offices of the big shipping companies in Leadenhall Street and Fenchurch Street. It gets gradually stronger as you turn down the Minories, past the shop where they sell charts and books on seamanship, wondering perhaps, if you chance to think of it, where the widow sister of William, the Quaker friend of Defoe's " Captain Singleton," lived with her four children and kept her shop, until you reach Tower Hill and the boundaries of Sailor Town proper.

I wonder how many Londoners there are who could give the right answer if they were asked the way to " Chain Locker." Not one in a thousand, most likely ; but to the seafaring community it is probably better known than any other spot in the whole of the Metropolis, better even than its near neighbour the Tower of London itself.

For the Chain Locker is the name given by the sailormen to the Shipping Office on Tower Hill, where crews sign on and pay off, and where the effects of dead seamen are kept either until they are claimed, or—failing a claimant—until they are sold by auction after the statutory time has elapsed : his dungarees, his donkey's breakfast, his hookpot and pannikin, his knife, his marline-spike, and the rest of his poor possessions, mostly to find their way in course of time into the junk stores and "sea outfitters'" shops of Limehouse and Poplar. Why "chain locker?" The connexion is obvious enough between anchors and the arrival and departure of ships . . . anyway, the Chain Locker may very well serve as the starting point of a cruise through London's Sailor Town.

From the Tower Bridge you can look down on the Upper Pool, busy enough still with the comings and goings of ships, with steamers and barges and tugs towing strings of lighters, though the centre of gravity has long ago shifted downstream. But it was busier far in the days before the docks were, when the shipping was all unloaded into lighters, and the cargo then conveyed to the wharves, or "legal quays," which lined the waterside. Those were the days when the river was infested by shoals of "river pirates" of various shades of distinction. There were the "river pirates" proper, who annexed lighters and cargoes bodily, very much after the style of the piratical junkmen of the Canton River in the 'fifties. There were "scuffle hunters," or, as we should call them, "sneak thieves," who haunted the quays and wharves—"light horsemen," "heavy horsemen," and "mudlarks." Those were

the illegal plunderers ; and legal plundering, too, was characteristic of the times. The profiteering spirit was abroad then as now, and the wharf-owners levied shameless toll on the merchants using the wharves. Yet they have picturesque and pleasant names, some of the old wharves : " King Henry's Wharf," " Lion Wharf," " Eagle Wharf," " Moiety Wharf," " Hubbucle's Wharf"—I don't know whether there is a Hubbucle now, but the name has a wonderfully Dickensian sound—and the various Sufferance Wharves recall one of the attempts made as far back as the days of the Tudors to cope with the evil of the proprietary quays. The Sufferance Wharves were only held, as their name indicates, on sufferance, that is, the grant of them was not renewable if the holders abused their privileges by charging exorbitant tolls. Whether the scheme worked or not is not recorded ; in any case, the construction of the docks put an end to the abuse for good and all.

Right opposite you as you stand on Tower Hill is the yellow stuccoed façade of the St. Katharine's Dock main entrance—a characteristic Georgian building, with the date (1828) over the gateway. St. Katharine's Dock nowadays is mostly given over to continental and coasting steamers. Its makers were not men of vision like those who planned the stately West India and East India systems. They had no idea of making provision for ships bigger than those of their own day ; hence, now as then, no ship of more than about one thousand tons can enter, even at the most favourable state of the tide.

The principal interest of St. Katharine's Dock

really centres in the site on which it lies, once occupied by one of London's oldest religious foundations. A chantry, a graveyard, and a hospital for lay brethren all lie, so to speak, beneath the surface of the dock, and the rattle of winches sounds unceasingly where once the chime of St. Katharine's by the Tower called the folk to praise and prayer. Gone is the little old chantry chapel built by Edward the Third's queen, and the hospital endowed by Stephen's wife, Matilda, in memory of her two dead children. And long silent have been the voices of the chanting choristers who, says old Stow, "sang but little less sweetly than those of Paul's Church itself." A print in the British Museum shows you the church, a small building with a low square tower, standing among tall old lap-boarded houses such as may still be seen here and there in waterside London.

There was a considerable outcry when the old landmarks were swept away; but it is suggested that it was not entirely disinterested, nor based on antiquarian zeal, and that the denunciation of the vandalism of the scheme was simply a case of "any stick to beat a dog with." The lay brothers were found a new home near Regent's Park, and the spiritual needs of the neighbourhood, out of which the opponents of the new dock had made a great capital, were met by an annual payment to the parson of St. Botolph, Aldgate, of fifty pounds. The old hospital forms the background of one of the late Sir Walter Besant's novels of old London, "Saint Katharine's by the Tower." Nobody seems to read Besant nowadays, but his books—albeit a trifle pedestrian sometimes—are worth a hundred of the

emotional gibberings of the "jazz" novelists of the neo-Georgian fashion.

\* \* \* \* \*

If you want to see the nearest modern equivalents of King Solomon's ivory, apes, and peacocks, then London Docks is one of the best places to look for them. To be strictly literal, so far as the apes and peacocks are concerned, you might perhaps look for those with more success in the animal emporiums of Ratcliff Highway, just the other side of the dock wall; but if you were making a map in the old style of the London dock region, you would certainly not be far wrong in inscribing "Heere much Ivorie."

For ivory you may see in plenty on what is pleasantly described as the "Ivory Floor," though it is not, as one might expect, approached by way of the Ivory Gate. Two hundred thousand pounds worth of it at once is set out there in orderly array—a sight to recall the days when one's youthful pulses thrilled to the great doings of Allan Quatermain and his companions. There is ivory from India, from Abyssinia, from East Africa, from the Belgian Congo—giant tusks weighing a hundred-weight and a half, and little ones but a few feet in length. There are rhinoceros horns, black and sinister, and tusks of wild boars, curved like old-fashioned hunting horns; fossil ivory from tusks of mammals that roamed the Siberian barrens in the far dawn of time; walrus teeth, and spiral horns of narwhals as long as barbers' poles and very like the traditional armament of the unicorn. Herman Melville in "Moby Dick" has an interesting passage about the narwhal. "The Narwhal," he

says, " is some sixteen feet in length, while its horn averages five feet, though some exceed ten and even attain to fifteen feet. Strictly speaking, this horn is but a lengthened tusk, growing out from the jaw in a line a little depressed from the horizontal. But it is only found on the sinister side, which has an ill effect, giving its owner something analogous to the aspect of a clumsy left-handed man. What precise purpose this ivory horn or lance answers it would be hard to say. It does not seem to be used like the blade of the sword-fish and bill-fish : though some sailors tell me that the Narwhal employs it for a rake in turning over the bottom of the sea for food. Charley Coffin said it was used for an ice-piercer ; for the Narwhal, rising to the surface of the Polar Sea, and finding it sheeted with ice, thrusts his horn up, and so breaks through. But you cannot prove either of these surmises to be correct. . . . The Narwhal I have heard called the Tusked Whale, the Horned Whale, and the Unicorn Whale. He is certainly a curious example of the Unicornism to be found in almost every kingdom of animated nature. From certain cloistered old authors I have gathered that this same sea unicorn's horn was in ancient days regarded as the great antidote against poison, and, as such, preparations of it brought immense prices. It was also distilled to a volatile salt for fainting ladies, the same way that the horns of the male deer are manufactured into hartshorn. Originally it was in itself accounted an object of great curiosity. Black Letter tells me that Sir Martin Frobisher on his return from that voyage, when Queen Bess did gallantly wave her jewelled hand to him from a

window of Greenwich Palace, as his bold ship sailed down the Thames : ' When Sir Martin returned from that voyage,' saith Black Letter, ' on bended knees he presented to her highness a prodigious long horn of the Narwhal, which for a long period after hung in the castle of Windsor.' " And so we come back again to London River, and to the sea unicorn horns which Frobisher's inheritors bring home to twentieth-century England.

Above the Ivory Floor is the Spice Floor, and above that again the Cinnamon Floor—places of a glorious Arabian Nights' fragrance, scented like some caravan winding across the deserts with all its bubbling camels laden with odorous bales : sticks of cinnamon and cassia, cloves and nutmegs by the million, ginger and the delicate filigree-work of mace, in bales and reddish teakwood boxes from Penang and Zanzibar and Java, and barrels from the West Indies. And you may also see fiery red chillies, and think of " Becky Sharp " ; and quinine enough to doctor the whole universe ; and pools of quicksilver in which you may look at your mirrored face and send your penknife and a two-pound weight for a sail. Then there are wool warehouses (very good for the lungs, I believe) and ostrich feather stores and wine cellars ; and tea and tobacco and bamboos and canes and queer skins from inside animals which it is earnestly to be hoped are not destined to be transformed into sausage skins.

There is no Ratcliff Highway nowadays in the London street guides, which is on the whole rather a pity. The habit of changing the names of streets always seems to me a singularly pointless one,



especially since such changes are nearly always for the worse from every point of view but that of the unimaginative philistines who are usually responsible for them. Why, for instance, should the time-honoured Petticoat Lane have given place to the meaningless and uninspired Middlesex Street, unless it were that the Victorians considered it indelicate to allude to a feminine undergarment? And why should Ratcliff Highway have lost its identity in that of St. George's Street? Perhaps it was thought that a street called after a saint must of necessity develop a few saintly characteristics; and as a matter of fact it has become something of a reformed neighbourhood, though it is doubtful if the change of name has had anything to do with it. A street by any other name smells just as unsavoury; and if names could have any effect of the auto-suggestive kind, then some of those delicate, fragrant names of foul courts and alleys would work a much-needed miracle.

Ratcliff Highway was, as its name indicates, once the main street running eastward through the waterside parish of Ratcliff as far as Ratcliff Cross, whose name still remains to commemorate either a market cross or a wayside shrine—probably the latter. Its importance as a thoroughfare passed away to a great extent with the construction, early in the nineteenth century, of the new Commercial Road to provide a more direct route to the East and West India Docks. But for fully a century it enjoyed the reputation of being one of the toughest streets in the world—on an equality with such sinks of iniquity as the “Barbary Coast” in San Francisco, or Paradise Street, Liverpool, in its most unregenerate days.

All the dregs and offscourings of male and female humanity swarmed in the foul and filthy dens of the Highway, ready to prey on the lusts, the follies, and the trustfulness of the sailor. Before his ship had fairly docked a horde of boarding-house keepers' and tailors' runners were over her rail, insinuating themselves into the good graces of the seamen, plying them with rotgut liquor, and speedily gaining the reputation of being the best of good fellows and a real friend to sailormen. And off rolled poor Jack to his "home from home" in the filthy purlieus of the Highway, there to remain half drunk until his pay was spent and he was well in the debt of his erstwhile hospitable host, who then sold him to an outward-bounder like so much cold mutton, and pocketed his advance note, having made a great show of generosity by endowing his victim with a shoddy pretence of an "outfit." Many and many a sailorman has gone ashore with a good suit of shoregoing clothes and a pocket full of money—to be found the next morning in the Highway naked but for his shirt and pants, drugged and robbed by some of the choice companions he had picked up in the evil haunts of the district.

Most of the notorious dance-halls and public-houses are now no more than fast-fading memories. Gone long ago are "Paddy's Goose" and the "Hole in the Wall" and the "Mahogany Bar"—places which (for all their infamous associations) must have heard some wild tales of the sea from the men who drifted into them from the wide world. Of the "Mahogany Bar" and the "Hole in the Wall" no trace remains; there is a "Paddy's Goose" still, but it is a very different affair from

the notorious tavern whose real sign was the "White Swan," known as "Paddy's Goose" wherever sailors met together. Apparently the proprietors of the reformed "Paddy's Goose"—the British and Foreign Sailors' Society—do not share the view of the re-christeners of the Highway as to the effects of a bad name, for they have boldly retained the old style, and even set up the old sign of the "Swan" over the new premises. Mr. Arthur Morrison has enshrined the name of the "Hole in the Wall" in his fine romance of *Sailor Town* of that name: a wonderful picture of Ratcliff long ago, its bullies, its smugglers, its river pirates—all that was wild and reckless and sinister in the life of the old waterside of London.

Gone, too, is all but the fading memory of "Tiger Bay," that evil district which formerly lay between the Highway and what is now Cable Street, with its "Norwegian Flag" and "Swedish Flag" dance-halls, where girls of fourteen years old—old in the ways of vice before they had left the years of childhood behind—danced the can-can with drunken sailors of all nationalities. How "Tiger Bay" came by its name I know not; but it could have had none more appropriate, for the men and women who inhabited it were tigers in human shape.

There is a stone in the churchyard of St. George's in the East which recalls one of the most tragic occurrences in the history of Ratcliff Highway—an incident to which De Quincey makes reference in his savagely ironical essay on "Murder as a Fine Art." In December, 1811, a young couple of the name of Marr, together with their infant child, were brutally murdered at No. 29 Ratcliff Highway,

under circumstances, says the long-rhymed epitaph, now only partly decipherable, "too Horrid to Relate." The murderer escaped scot-free for the time being, only to fall into the hands of justice shortly afterwards when in the act of trying to repeat the performance at another house in the Highway. He managed to commit suicide while under sentence of death ; and the tale goes that during some street repairs in the district years later a human skeleton was found at a meeting of four cross-roads with a stake driven through its ribs, which was believed to be that of the murderer.

To a great extent the district is, externally, little changed. Some of the narrow alleys still survive, such as Ship Alley, whose old leaning, gabled houses, with their stoutly shuttered windows, bear witness to need in bygone days for protection against unwelcome intruders. Nasty places, too, these crooked byways must have been on dark or foggy nights—with only the pale light of a lamp at the streetward end throwing a feeble ray along them, and the blank face of the frowning dock wall opposite ; handy places in which to sandbag or pitch-plaster a half-drunk sailorman or slip a knife between his shoulders.

Rambling up one of these alleys one day I came out into a queer little old-world square, with discreet-looking Georgian houses round it whose walls could no doubt tell some strange tales if they chose. It was just such a respectable, staid-looking spot as might have been inhabited a century or so ago by shipbuilders or wharfingers or the master mariners whose names and callings are still to be read on the weathered and grimy stones in the churchyard



ST. GEORGE'S IN THE EAST FROM LONDON DOCKS



of St. George's. Now they are filthy, swarming tenements, with sooty bambinos tumbling about their untended steps, and slatternly foreign women gossiping in the once hospitable Georgian doorways, under the fanlights dim with dirt. In the middle of the square the remains of a cast-iron railing lay round a quadrangle of sour, sooty earth, all humps and hollows, where two or three workmen were busy—not very busy, though—demolishing a little church or chapel of the orthodox eighteenth century style of architecture. One side of it was already down, and the gaunt rafters of the roof, the torn-up floor with its open vaults and stones thrown all awry, looked like some strange vision of the Day of Judgment. A horrible litter of rags about the floor, and the half-obliterated name over the door of Something-isky, Marine Store, showed to what depths of degradation the place had sunk.

A local luminary informed me that it used to be the Swedish Church, where they buried the “Kings o’ Sweden an’ them”—a rather surprising piece of folk-lore whose authenticity I was quite sorry to be compelled to doubt. However, I made some further inquiries, and was rewarded by the discovery that the place had been the first Swedenborgian Church founded by Swedenborg himself, and that he was buried there. His body was only removed a few years ago and reinterred in Sweden—not so picturesque a story as that of the apocryphal “Kings o’ Sweden an’ them,” but sufficiently interesting all the same. It must have been a pretty little building in its day, with a few trees waving round it, and the grass growing green in its grave-

yard, before Mr. Isky and his marine store entered its forsaken portals.

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I spent quite a long time one day looking for Labour-in-Vain Street—for no particular reason that I know of except that its quaint name had taken my fancy, as names sometimes do, and that I had made of the name a kind of imaginary portrait of the place to my own satisfaction. It appears on the map as a crooked and rather narrow street leading down from Shadwell High Street in the direction of the river ; and the picture I had formed of it was of one of those survivals of old waterside Ratcliff such as one does still find here and there—a street of old-fashioned houses such as the families of decent seafaring folk may have lived in a century ago, when Wapping was still a pleasant enough region to dwell in of the salty sort.

I found it at last and, as generally happens, it wasn't in the least like my preconceived idea of it !

It was about the twentieth person I asked who showed it to me. The other nineteen were "strangers in that part " or else looked at me suspiciously, as if they thought I was " 'avin' a gyme."

" Labour-in-Vain Street ? " said No. Twenty ; " that's Labour-in-Vain Street—and there ain't one person in a hundred about here could tell you."

I followed the direction of his pointing finger, but I could see no street at all : nothing but the spiked railings of a very new recreation ground sloping down to the Shadwell Basin dock entrance from the river, and a nearly demolished building at the corner.



"Yes," he continued, warming to his subject, "that's Labour-in-Vain Street, that is, or leastways it used to be. Pulled it all down, they 'ave, to make room for this 'ere park, and turned 'undreds of families out to do it. Call it a free country! They turned an old lady out o' that 'ouse they're pullin' down now, an' she died two days after they moved 'er. Seventy-five years old, an' 'er family lived in that 'ouse a hundred and fifty years. An' then they wonder at all these 'ere Shin Feiners an' Bolsheeviks an' such. Free country, indeed! . . . 'What was it called Labour-in-Vain Street for?' I couldn't tell you. I've lived in these parts all my life, but I couldn't tell you that—not unless it was because there used to be a dust-shoot at the end of it, and I suppose you might call shootin' dust labour wasted. Similarly, you might ask me why they call that place down by Tunnel Pier 'Execution Dock'—I couldn't tell you. I might tell you they say they used to hang people there, long ago—mind, I don't say they didn't, nor I don't say they did. All as I can say is I never see 'em—consequence is, I can't say, not for certain."

Still, I can't bring myself to accept that horrible dust-shoot derivation for the quaint old name. Rather may it have belonged to some remote time when the street was a mere causeway among marshes and shifting sands, and all efforts to make a stable foundation for the builder seemed to be but Labour in Vain. Or, better still, may not some piously minded builder of days gone by have adorned his dwelling with a motto from the words of the Psalmist :

Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it.

So I shall never see Labour-in-Vain Street after all. Perhaps it is just as well. I dare say the reality would have banished the dream for ever. But it still winds on through the world of dreams, with its leaning old lap-boarded houses, its glimpses of green gardens, its windows with bottled ships and huge shells mysteriously murmuring of the sea. . . .

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They are talking ominously about "improvements" to the Shadwell Basin which threaten to sweep away some of the very few remaining bits of the Wapping waterfront. There is a pretty old-fashioned house—a dockmaster's, I think—on the pierhead, and beside it a little old tavern bearing the old-world name of the "Prospect of Whitby." I don't know the origin of this name either, but it was probably that of one of those old "Geordie" collier brigs whose allotted anchorage was just at this point, opposite the end of Old Gravel Lane, so called on account of the loads of gravel which used to be carted down that way as ballast for the colliers on their return journey.

The "Prospect of Whitby" is nothing much to look at from the street side ; but if you go along the narrow passage which separates it from the next building, and so down the worn steps to the water-side, you can step right back three-quarters of a century. There are a couple of barges lying on the mud, with some men working on their hulls, and behind is the old-fashioned inn, with its green-painted wooden balcony overlooking Limehouse Reach and the Rotherhithe shore opposite, and a row of faces looking over the tops of pint pots, and

spitting solemnly into the tide, as the owners of similar faces have done for generations.

Close by this bit of foreshore is that spot of sinister associations known to bygone generations as "Execution Dock." Here it was that pirates were hung in chains, by way of example to such daring spirits among the sea-going community as might feel inclined to emulate their doings. Mr. Masefield, in his book of essays, "A Mainsail Haul," gives a graphic little pen-picture of the kind of end which generally awaited the High Tobymen of the sea as certainly as Tyburn Tree loomed, a grisly shape, at the end of the highwayman's road of adventure.

Both by the map and by local tradition the site of Execution Dock may be fixed with tolerable certainty. It was situated almost where the present Tunnel Pier and the Thames Police Station stand, between King Henry's Wharf and that of the Aberdeen Steam Navigation Company. It is a conspicuous spot, such as our forefathers considered desirable for a gibbet, and the gallows with its grisly burden would be visible on a clear day the whole length of Upper and Lower Pool; while on dark or foggy nights the charnel odour and the dismal clanking of the chains would strike awe into the hearts of the crews of ships anchored or groping their way up or down the river.

## CHAPTER II

Bygone Poplar—Blackwall Yard—Brunswick Pier and Hotel  
—Unlucky Ships—The West India Docks—A few Poplar  
Pictures—Anchors—In Chinatown

THE district of Poplar is said to get its name from the number of poplar trees which grew there in days gone by. You find no poplars there nowadays ; but then, neither do you find kings at Seven Kings, nor hay in the Haymarket, nor saints in St. John's Wood. That they are not there now is not to say that they were not there aforetime.

The poplars (if poplars there were) may quite conceivably have been those which were planted round the old Brunswick Dock to serve as a wind-break to protect the ships lying there. They are quick-growing trees, and so would have been very likely to be chosen for that purpose.

The names " Blackwall " and " Millwall " seem to be older. Why Blackwall I know not ; Millwall is said to have been so called on account of a wind-mill which formerly stood there. The derivation of the " Isle of Dogs " is a vexed question. Some authorities maintain that it got its name from the kennel of hounds Charles the Second kept there. Others again say it was the " Isle of Ducks," because of the great number of wildfowl which frequented marshy fastnesses. Either derivation may be the

right one; but future etymologists may well conjecture that it was originally the "Isle of Docks," for it contains no less than three of the great dock systems, as well as some of the smaller ones, such as the Poplar Dock and Blackwall Basin.

One pictures Poplar in the old days as a pleasant enough riverside place, already only at the beginning of its shipbuilding renown—a place of comfortable houses inhabited by seafaring folk and by the shipwrights and other craftsmen employed at the Blackwall Yard. Many famous men have passed along its narrow High Street in those days—not least among them Sir Walter Raleigh, whose house in Poplar survived the changes and chances of centuries only to be swept away by the construction of the Blackwall Tunnel. A picture of the house may still be seen in the Poplar Free Library, showing it as a quaint, unassuming place, where no doubt Sir Walter was glad to retire to his books and his dreams from the hollow insincerities of the Court, and where he may have welcomed many a seafaring man with brave tales to tell of the great doings at sea and the fabled gold of Guiana. One would have thought the makers of the Tunnel might have contrived to spare so historic a dwelling; and that it might have been acquired for the purposes of a museum of nautical history in this spot, which was the cradle of Britain's maritime greatness.

Poplar jogged along comfortably enough, building her king's ships with their towering stern- and forecastles, their bows a splendour of conch-blowing Tritons and sea monsters, and the ships for "John Company" with their old-world names, "Globe," "Hector," "Trades Increase," and "New

Year's Gift." It had its great days, too, when Blackwall Yard was a-flutter with bunting, and all the great folk came down from Town to see a new Indiaman take the water. Royal visitors were not infrequent, from the days of Charles the Second onward. The Merry Monarch, like a good many other people, had as good an eye for a fine ship as for a pretty woman. Pepys has more than one reference to Blackwall—to "the fine new dock there," to some natural curiosities he saw there in the way of fossilized oak, and to the ships building, amongst them the "Royal Oak," built in 1661, the ninth ship which appears on the records of the yard.

But the zenith of Poplar's prosperity was in the middle of last century. Then it was that the shipyards of Wigram & Green, of Joseph Somes and Walker, hummed with activity, and the sound of the shipwrights' hammers and the caulkers' mallets was never silent. The East and West India Docks were thronged with the lofty masts and delicate network of standing and running rigging of the fairest ships man ever built. It was the crown of the centuries-long development of the sailing ship. The whole waterfront was a buzz of excitement when the first ships were expected with the new season's teas. Every tavern between Blackwall and the Pool echoed with the names of the various ships of the fleet—"Ariel," "Thermopylæ," "Sir Lancelot." Nor was the interest confined to the seafaring community; even in country villages far from the smell of salt water, the news of the "China tea race" was anxiously awaited and staid business men betted freely on the great event.

The old Poplar shipowners and builders belonged to a type of business men fast passing away. In them the personal side of shipowning was strongly emphasized. Their firms were no mere soulless machines. Many of them—like Captain John Willis, whose “white hat,” says Mr. Basil Lubbock in one of his fascinating books of nautical history, “was as familiar an object as the capstan on the pierhead of the East India Dock”—had themselves followed the sea. Their captains were their personal friends; their ships were not mere dividend-earning machines, but almost living things. The loss of the clipper “Spindrift” so affected her owner that he went out of his mind. Their attitude towards their ships was indeed more like that of a racehorse owner towards his stud. Some of them, like Captain Willis, would never sell their ships to foreign owners; but in most cases death brought about the break-up of their fleets at last, and even the beautiful “Cutty Sark,” the apple of Willis’s eye, passed finally into alien hands.

Several terrible sea-disasters are associated with the name of a very well-known Thames-side firm, that of Duncan Dunbar. The “Cospatrick” was destroyed by fire, and her survivors were reduced to such a terrible plight that they were at last driven to cannibalism. The loss of the “Northfleet,” with more than two hundred lives, off Dungeness was a second; and most terrible of all was the wreck of the “Dunbar” off Sydney Head with only one survivor. The sharks and the merciless sea took the rest.

Those were the days when a ship was a ship to the seaman—to be growled at, no doubt, on occasion,

but to be defended and upheld against others with an almost personal pride. I got into conversation one day with an old, lame shipkeeper in London Docks, who had been a sailor in the wool clippers. How his eyes lightened as he spoke of them, how he rolled their names, those old ships, off his tongue, as he yarned away, roughly lyrical, on the subject of the ships of yesterday! . . . "I knowed Green's ships—the 'Superb' an' the 'Melbourne' an' them—an' the 'Sobra'n,' I knowed 'er—'Mermerus'—'Esperus'—'Star o' France' . . . went out to Melbourne in seventy days, she did; but the 'John o' Gaunt' beat 'er . . . an' the Lochs, 'Loch Garry' an' 'Loch Vennachar' . . . lost with all 'ands, she was . . . an' the 'Ben Venue' as Bully Martin was skipper of . . . an' mind, them *was* ships! Talk about your China clippers—the place for them was the light winds, an' just the flap o' their sails to take 'em along. But them big, powerful ships, same as I've been talkin' about, they wanted a gale o' wind to show themselves off. An' plenty o' sails in the locker, too, 'cos when Bully Martin set it, 'e set it, an' it 'ad to stop there if it blew out o' the boltropes. London to Melbourne non-stop, that was 'is ticket . . . Oh, them *was* ships, them was!"

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There is always a sort of leisurely dignity about the East India Docks. Nobody ever seems in a vulgar hurry there, and the spirit of old John Company still seems to linger about them. They are given up now, for the most part, to liners—Union Castle boats—and cargo boats from the East.



When you leave behind the clanging trams and the rumble of the buses in the East India Dock Road, it is not hard to people the dock basin with the ships of the past—to fancy some trim Blackwall frigate at her berth, or a slim China clipper being towed in by her attendant tug, proudly as the winner of a classic race being led in to the paddock : first home with the season's teas.

And the strip of waterfront which lies tucked away between the masts and funnels of the shipping in the dock and the river, with its endless busy procession of craft, great and small, is—with certain of the buildings upon it—perhaps more intimately connected than any other spot on Thames-side with the history of our maritime development during the past three and a half centuries.

In itself, and at a first glance, the place is not much different from any other part of grimy, industrial Poplar. True, the big yellow-brick building on the waterfront, with its roomy bow-windows looking out across the river, suggests thoughts of another century than ours ; and there is a lingering picturesqueness about the little pier close at hand, where a couple of Thames barges are just now lying, their tawny sails brailed up, their old-fashioned brass vanes flashing in the sun. But for the rest it is just an ordinary ship-repairing establishment, with a steamer or two in dry dock (looking as uncompromisingly ugly as only a steamer out of its proper element can look) and the usual shipyard clutter of rusty plates, derelict ventilators and fidley gratings, and maritime litter of every sort and kind.

But this is none other than the celebrated Black-

wall Yard—"Green's Yard"—which was building ships in the days of the Tudors, and remains to-day as the sole survivor of the great Thames shipbuilding firms of the past. It was in existence in the days of Elizabeth, and provided ships for her Navy; but the first vessels definitely recorded on the annals of the yard are the "Globe," "Thomas," and "Hector," built in 1612 for the Honourable East India Company.

These ships mark the beginning of a connexion with John Company which lasted until the break-up of the Company's fleet in 1832. An old eighteenth-century print shows the yard as it then was, with an Indiaman on the stocks and Green's cows grazing in the pleasant, tree-studded meadows which stretched back to what is now the East India Dock Road with its clanging trams and jostling polyglot traffic. In those days a lock communicated with the dock, which then, as now, lay at the back of the yard, and there was situated the mast-house, a structure beneath which the completed hull was placed for the masts to be lowered into position. The yard was a busy place then; one old print shows six ships on the stocks, and as well as the building of new ships the repair of old ones added to the volume of business done there.

The old East Indiamen, although not noted at any time for fast sailing qualities, were beautiful ships in their way. Only the best of materials were employed in their construction, and when the fleet was dispersed and the ships were sold some realized upwards of six thousand pounds for breaking up. Their bows were rich with scrollwork and gilding and great swelling figureheads, and their

quarter-galleries and sternports were enriched with figures of Tritons and mermaids, foliage and flowers.

But they were wonderfully stout and seaworthy, those apple-cheeked old wagons, and, moreover, they could on occasion put up a capital fight against a pirate or privateer or even a ship of the line.

The passing of John Company marked the beginning of a new era. The firms which had formerly built for the Company now, with the disappearance of the monopoly, entered the field as owners and builders on their own account, and among them Blackwall Yard—then Wigram & Green's—was one of the most important.

Then began the period of the celebrated "Blackwall Frigates," which kept up some of the best traditions of the Company's service whilst relinquishing many of its drawbacks. These ships, which were often fast sailers—though speed, except in one or two notable instances, was not the chief aim of the Blackwall builders, as in the case of the Australian Black Ballers and the tea and wool clippers—were justly famed in the Indian and Australian trades during the palmy days of sail. Among notable ships of the period may be mentioned the beautiful "Newcastle," the "Windsor Castle," the "Superb"—Green's first iron ship—the "Kent," the "Alfred," and the "Essex." They went in for a great deal of smartness and a semi-naval discipline. Captain Crutchley, in "My Life at Sea," describes them as follows: "The ships of Green, Wigram, Smith, and Dunbar were the lineal descendants of the old East Indiamen. They carried big crews, and they were mostly commanded

and officered by men who were splendid seamen as well as gentlemen. The command of one of these vessels for a voyage extending over nine months might be worth a thousand pounds."

A "Memorandum of Ships built at Blackwall Yard," compiled by a member of the firm, records some eight hundred ships, beginning with the "Globe" in 1612, and ending with some unnamed barges in 1907, when, says a note, the firm gave up shipbuilding and went in for repairs.

Perhaps the most notable incident in the whole of the yard's long history was the building of the tea clipper "Challenger." It has been said that as a general rule the Blackwall ships went in for all-round seaworthy qualities rather than for speed, but to that rule the "Challenger" was a brilliant exception. At that time—the early 'fifties—the astonishing records which were being made by the new American clippers were causing something like a panic among British owners, whose ships were lying idle in Chinese ports while the Yankee cracks were being freely chartered by London merchants at far higher rates.

It was then that Richard Green of Blackwall—"Dicky" Green as he was popularly termed in shipping circles—came forward and built the clipper "Challenger" as a direct counterblast to the American "Challenge." The Yankee was a far bigger ship; but the little "Challenger" beat her on the homeward run with the new teas, and British shipowners began to take heart of grace. Curiously enough, Blackwall Yard never went into the tea trade very deeply. Green's only built two clippers besides the "Challenger"—"Highflyer" and "Min."

“Highflyer” was never in the first flight, and “Min” met a violent end early in her career.

About the yard, as you see it to-day, little remains that is old, except an eighteenth century dated stone which has been embodied in some newer buildings at the entrance from Poplar High Street, Richard Green’s old house, and the dividing wall between “Green’s” and what was once the equally famous yard of Money Wigram. Wigram and Green were partners until about the middle of last century, and when the partnership was dissolved the yard was divided into two equal parts, and a wall run up between the two in twenty-four hours. It sounds like quick work, but the wall stands to this day, though Wigram’s yard has long been closed down, and its site is now occupied by the Midland Railway Company.

Richard Green’s old house is a good example of a solid, comfortable Georgian or Early Victorian house, such as contented captains of industry three-quarters of a century ago, when no doubt Poplar was a pleasanter place of residence than it is to-day, and people like Dickens’s “Captain Ravender” of the “Golden Mary” lived in the old-fashioned houses in Poplar High Street.

The curious may find some few models of Black-wall ships in the Reading Room of the Poplar Free Library, and others are to be seen in the Shipping Section of South Kensington Museum. I have also seen some pictures in the possession of the firm—those quaint and by no means artistic representations of the ships they built which it was the custom of shipowners to commission journeyman artists to paint for them: pictures with neat, permanently

waved sea, and sails so round and taut you could, as the saying went, "crack a flea on them." In the cellars of the old Brunswick Hotel I have been shown some half-models, mostly of the yard's later ships. I wonder if there is any authentic model in existence of the historic little "Challenger." I have never heard of one, nor even seen a picture of her.

It is strange to think that, of all that strength, beauty, and swiftness; all that wealth of patient labour and craftsman's skill; that solid oak and teak and elm that had been growing through the slow generations; that copper, and iron, and flashing brass; that stout canvas and honest rope—there should after a few years no more remain than of a child's paper boat launched on a gutter stream: no more, but for a memory in some old man's mind, a model or two in a few seafaring families, a name in an old seaman's song.

In the Poplar Library may also be seen the old house-flag of Wigram & Green, a St. George's Cross with a blue square in the centre. There is rather an interesting story of the origin of this flag. One of Wigram & Green's ships, the "Sir Edward Paget," arrived in port flying the firm's new house-flag, at that time the St. George's cross only on a white ground. Promptly a naval officer, greatly scandalized by the spectacle of a merchant vessel flying an admiral's flag, sent a peremptory message to the "Paget" ordering the obnoxious flag to be instantly struck. There was nothing for it but to obey; but the captain of the "Paget" got over the difficulty in a highly ingenious fashion. Whipping out his blue silk bandana, he handed it to the

sailmaker, with instructions to stitch it on in the middle of the offending bunting. This done, the flag was hoisted anew, and the makeshift device remained the house-flag of Green & Wigram as long as the fleets existed—Wigram's, after the partnership was dissolved, retaining the original flag with the blue patch over the centre of the red cross ; Green's flying the flag with the red cross over the blue centre.

The Blackwall tradition has added at least two phrases to the nautical vocabulary. "Shipshape and Blackwall fashion" is still a term symbolical of everything smart and efficient in the way of "sailorizing." True, it has a variant, such as have many of the old shanties—"Shipshape and Bristol fashion." But it is more than likely that the west-country port borrowed the term from the Thames-side yard. After all, Bristol is rather too general to fit the context ; whereas Blackwall and smartness were undeniably synonymous from the days of the East Indiamen.

The other phrase in which the name of Blackwall figures is in connexion with the sailor's knot, known as a "Blackwall hitch." A Blackwall hitch is, strictly speaking, a half-knot ; it is a method of securing the end of a rope to a hook-block by simply passing the end of the rope round the hook and under itself in such a way that it will jam when a strain is put upon it. Or it may be used for joining two hawsers together. A midshipman's hitch and a double Blackwall hitch are other and more complicated forms of the same thing ; and here it may be mentioned that apprentices in the Blackwall fleet were always called "midshipmen"

—hence, possibly, the term “ midshipmen’s hitch ” applied to a variation of the Blackwall hitch. But why the Blackwall hitch should be thus specially localized it is hard to say. It is one of the simplest knots conceivable, and must be wellnigh universal among seafaring folk.

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That big, bow-windowed, yellow-brick building already referred to is now used as offices for Blackwall Yard. But it is obvious enough to the most casual observer that it was not built for that purpose.

This was once the “ Brunswick Hotel,” and its name still survives in that of the pier adjoining. In the old days, when an East Indiaman was ready for sea, she would be warped out through the lock entrance of the Brunswick Dock and anchor off the pier until it was time for her to sail. Sometimes stress of weather or some other circumstance might keep her alongside the pier for many days, and the passengers and their friends, the officers and *their* friends, provided the Brunswick Hotel with plenty of custom.

Then its lofty rooms—now mainly divided by office partitions—were continually thronged by the going or returning passengers of the East Indiamen ; and it was also, we are told, patronized by Royalty in the person of the Duke of Clarence, afterwards William the Fourth, who often used to go down to Blackwall to enjoy the nautical society in which he was always far more at home than in the stilted atmosphere of the Court.

What memories they hold, those big, spacious rooms and echoing stairways ! What shadowy





THE BRUNSWICK HOTEL FROM GREEN'S YARD



figures of folk, real and unreal, seem to throng them! Colonel Newcome and little Clive side by side with the latter's great namesake—soldiers, yellow-faced nabobs, pompous civil servants, officers with wonderful whiskers and trim waists such as would put the twentieth century maidens to shame, women in the crinolines and ringlets of the Mutiny period, and ayahs gay as tropical birds with little pale children clinging to them—while from the pier outside seem to echo the cries of the seamen and the shouted orders of the mates, the creak and moan of the mooring ropes, and the song of the river wind through shroud and spar.

Later, the building was used as a sort of hostel for emigrants during the rush to Australia in the 'sixties, adding yet another phase to the human drama that these old walls have seen—to be finally converted, as we have seen, into Green's offices, the purpose it still serves.

Blackwall Yard itself is not the best place in the world to dream in during working hours; but Brunswick Pier (when it *is* quiet) is a wonderfully quiet and secluded little spot. The old hotel closes it in at one end; at the other is the entrance to the East India Docks; and at the back are the dock wall and the Great Eastern Railway's Blackwall Station.

Even the railway station helps to keep up the illusion of the past, an unusual thing for a railway station to do.

I suppose there are people who come and go by train to and from Blackwall Station. But I have never seen any. It looks, with its curious mid-Victorian architecture—a vast, echoing, desolate place it is, with huge, gaunt, flyblown waiting-rooms,

and a mouldy, musty smell about it—as if it had been locked up and forgotten for years. To me, it always suggests, I know not why, mystery stories by Wilkie Collins, and the illustrations in the early volumes of “ Cornhill.” I have cudgelled my brains many a time in the attempt to establish the mental connexion between the two. If I were what I believe is called a “ psychic ” person—which I am happy to say I am not—I might be able to work it out ; but as it is—unless it be that the musty smell is like that of bound volumes of ancient magazines—I can only give it up. But whatever the reason, there it is ; and I never see that station, with its great empty caves of cold and desolation, and its shabby, blistered paint, and its windows with blue and brown coloured glass in them, but I expect to see females in deep mourning, and crinolines, or garments with camel-like protuberances behind, and hair done up in braids and chignons, and pork-pie hats, like a photograph album come to life, issuing from its yawning portals.

On fine afternoons in summer old Poplar and young Poplar and out-of-work Poplar repairs to Brunswick Pier to dream its old dreams or its young dreams, or push the “ byby ” out, or sit and spit into the river, as the case may be. But in the biting days of early spring, or the foggy days of autumn, you can generally have the place all to yourself. It is a rare place to dream in then when the sun goes down in a great sullen pomp and pageantry of clouds, and the mist and the low-hanging smoke together seem to fashion themselves into a hundred shifting, changing shapes. It is easy enough then to call up the fair ghosts of the vanished Blackwallers—stately

Indiaman, slim clipper, South Sea whaler, King's ship, and Blackwall frigate—swept away, one and all, on the great river of years, flowing as steadily and unrestingly on its way as London's river rushing eternally to the sea.

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Blackwall Yard is about the last survivor of the old London shipbuilding concerns. The once famous yard of Joseph Somes lies somewhere beneath the waters of the South West India Dock. Northfleet Yard, where some of the Dunbar ships were built, is long ago gone, and so is Bilbe, Perry & Company's place in Rotherhithe, the home of that brief but interesting phase of shipbuilding history—the era of the composite ship. The last vessel of any importance to be built in Poplar was the Super-Dreadnought "Thunderer," launched from the slips of the Thames Yard, at Millwall, in 1911.

Another Millwall celebrity was the famous "Great Eastern," that costly experiment whose one useful bit of work was done when she helped to lay the Atlantic cable. It is perhaps not generally known that when the "Great Eastern" came to be broken up, the skeleton of a man was found built into her hull, between the double bottoms which were one of the special features of the ship—quite enough, according to nautical superstition, to account for the persistent ill-fortune which dogged her.

The "Great Eastern" cost nearly three-quarters of a million to build, and almost ruined most of the people who had anything to do with her. She was designed to carry first-class passengers to India, and her accommodation was far ahead of anything

known at that time. Her saloon was "as big as Drury Lane Theatre," and a special point was her lighting, by gas "made on board." She had six masts and five funnels—one of the latter was removed when she was cable-laying—and both paddle and screw engines. She started badly with the accidental drowning of her first commander, Captain Harrison, when he was going on board her in a small boat in Southampton Water. Her next accident was an explosion, which caused several casualties, during her trial trip round the coast. On her first trip—to New York, not to India—she only carried about fifty passengers. They must have had a weird experience in that great, empty ship. She made several trips, none of which paid, and then, in 1864, took to cable-laying. Her ill-luck pursued her to the very end of her career, for on her way to Liverpool from Dublin to be broken up, she got adrift, lost her tugs, and was picked up heading for the Clyde after having had a narrow shave of being wrecked on the Calf of Man. Her huge hull was only painted twice during her life, and on one of the two occasions two hundred tons of mussels was scraped off it. In many ways her great size was a serious drawback to her, for there was no dock which could take her at that time, and her speed must have suffered greatly through the foulness of her keel.

Two of the last clippers built for the China tea trade were also Millwall ships—"Hallowe'en" and "Blackadder." Curiously enough, "Blackadder's" early history was also one long record of disaster. Millwall seems to have specialized in "unlucky" ships.

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I am not sure that the West India Docks are not the most picturesque of all the dock systems on the Poplar side of the river. There is a sort of spaciousness and dignity about them befitting the great days when they were planned ; generally, too, there is a warm West Indian smell of sugar and spice and all that's nice—not forgetting Jamaica rum. Ships—even steamers—always look their best there. There is something wonderfully satisfying about the view you get from the end of one of these long basins, when the berths are nearly all occupied and there are two or three ships lying out in the middle of the dock as well—the many coloured funnels, the fluttering ensigns and house-flags, the pleasant rattle of cargo derricks mingled with the mewing of gulls.

There is usually a great variety of shipping there—steamers of all kinds : Danish, Swedish, American, as well as British, and the last time I was there I saw—but with as yet too clear a recollection of our drowned sailors to feel any very warm glow of hospitality—one or two specimens of the ubiquitous Hun, from which were being unloaded a variety of punts and canoes and such like pleasure craft. Then there are often two or three big fore-and-afters and perhaps a little topsail schooner (ten to one she is from Wales—the “ Cadwallader Jones ” or some such name) from some quiet little Welsh port on the shores of Cardigan Bay or the Bristol Channel, where the wood smoke hangs blue of an evening over the slate roofs of the little town, and there are slabs of dried fish hanging outside most of the cottage doors in the narrow climbing streets . . . and by the seaweed-hung quay a lantern shines out in the

twilight . . . and on Sunday the Welsh voices, which have scolded shrilly in the streets all week, float out melodiously from a dozen little chapels of Ebenezer and Zion.

The lovely big model of the West Indiaman over the entrance to the Export Dock is getting sadly the worse for wear. She looks rather as if she had been for a cruise on her own account some night when the everyday world was asleep, and got badly mixed up with a West Indian hurricane; for her top-gallant masts have carried away altogether, and the shrouds are lying across the lower rigging. I wonder it is no one's business to take her down and have her re-rigged and thoroughly overhauled. It ought not to be a difficult matter. There are still skilled riggers to be found, and there are plenty of good rigged models of ships of the period to go by. It is a sad pity to see her going all to pieces for want of a stitch in time.

I like those big, open sheds where they store the great balks of teak and mahogany and greenheart and what not from the tropical forests. Great, dark, mysterious places they are, with glints of daylight showing here and there through the rafters, and making long, dusty lanes of sunlight when the sun strikes through them. The mighty logs seem to have brought with them something of the brooding, inscrutable spirit of the dark land whence they came—so that, even on the brightest day, to plunge into the shadow of those dusky piles is to fancy you hear a faint echo of the throbbing of African drums, smell the hot smell of sluggish pools where crocodiles lie basking like logs in the slime, or hear the dull thunder of the surf on sandy bar



where the great rivers of Africa crawl sullenly to meet the sea.

\* \* \* \* \*

There is beauty in Poplar even now.

Perhaps it is a swing-bridge opening to allow the passage of some little French sailing vessel from Rouen or Dieppe or Havre, with an old man at the wheel of so impossible and unbelievable a nauticalness that one can excuse the cry of "Skipper sahlines" from some impolite wharf-rat . . . or a tall windjammer lifting her spars above the sheds in a rosy sunset.

I remember once—it was in one of the mean streets of the Isle of Dogs, where nearly all the houses have flagstaffs in their back gardens and something in the nature of a nautical curiosity in the front windows—I remember seeing a big windjammer (the "Rowena" she was) which had just gone into dry-dock. Her bowsprit soared right over the roofs of the "smoky dwarf houses," her masts towered, incredibly tall, over the huddle of grimy slates. She looked a thing strangely aloof, strangely unreal—like man's undying dream of beauty taking shape, rising triumphant, over the sordid smallness of his daily life. . . .

Her crew were just leaving her. They came streaming out through the dock gates as I passed—the usual mixed forecastle crowd of all nationalities, Dutch, Dagoes, Finns, a nigger or two, and at the tail of the procession a fur-capped, thickset fellow with a battered fiddle tucked under his arm, and on either side of him, eager and excited, a bunch of apprentices in the most disreputable of

dungarees. . . . They will remember that old shell-back and his fiddle, those boys, when they are grown to be old men, and think how never music sounded so wonderful as the squeaky tunes he wrung out of it in the golden dog-watches of long ago.

I suppose the next generation of seafarers will know the "sail" apprentice no more. Cadets there will be, no doubt, or midshipmen, or whatever they choose to call them; but the genuine "Brass-bounder" of the days gone by—never again. It was a hard school they went to, those youngsters, but it made fine men of them. I remember a liner officer describing how he had shown one of the cadets in his charge some snapshots of his first ship—whose memory he cherished as most sailormen do cherish such memories, with tender and unashamed sentiment. "Good Lord!" was all the enlightened young modern's comment. "Fancy going to sea in things like that!" "Young cub!" added my informant bitterly. "I could have boxed his young ears!"

Many old sailors—and not very old ones either in point of age—must have chuckled over the paragraphs in the Press about the two "boy" scouts who accompanied the Shackleton Expedition. Boys! why, they were husky young men! and the apprentice of twenty years ago had sailed Sou' Spain half-a-dozen times at their age, and thought precious little about it. Times are changed. Farewell, you young "Brassbounder!" You had your faults and your failings, no doubt. You were as full of mischief as an egg is full of meat; but you had faced death when other lads are at their books, and suffered while yet a mere child in years

your stern initiation in the mysteries of your heritage, the sea.

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I don't suppose I could find the place again if I tried. I only know it is somewhere in the Isle of Dogs. The masts and yards of a big sailing ship had beckoned to me over the tops of the sheds and the roofs of the grimy houses. I wanted to get to closer quarters with her ; and with this end in view I turned in at an open gateway which looked as if it led down to the basin where she was lying. It didn't, but I was not sorry that I had made the mistake.

It was a queer, quiet place : quiet like a marine store where no one ever seems to buy anything—with the rather sinister quietness of such places. Outside, the traffic boomed by, a cold wind blew off the river, stirring the idle rigging of the moored vessel, and a few gulls hovered above her with thin, shrill pipings. There was a sky of pale greys and blues, blown clouds and misty spaces between, the sun going down tearfully behind a bank, and a wan light shining on the puddles.

And all round, nothing but anchors—anchors of all shapes and sizes, rusted beyond recognition or comparatively new, ranging from the regular old-fashioned " mud-hook " to the modern stockless pattern which projects from every steamer's hawse-pipe. There they lay, piled up in orderly heaps, with lanes leading in among them like pathways among tombs. The wonder is where they all come from. Some may have been fished up out of the mud when a cable has parted ; certain worthy

tradesmen of the South Pacific coast do a good business in this line, after the dreaded "Norther" has bidden many a good vessel slip her cables and run for open sea.

Are they merely old iron, on their way to the smelter's furnace again? or are they going to be furbished up, like the effects of dead sailors, and sold as new to resume their unchronicled wanderings, and grip once more the mud of harbours known and unknown? If they could only talk, what yarns they could tell, these sea-fretted lumps of old iron!—yarns of small, strange cities, white under tropic skies; of surf breaking over West Indian reefs, and seabirds' cries shrill and keen above its thunder; palm-fringed islets and thirsty Bahaman cays of ghost-watched pirates' treasure; and queer little dusty towns under the seaward slope of the Andes with a red anchor painted up on the cliff-side to guide vessels to their moorings. What salt crust of the seas has caked about them; what joy of meeting, pangs of parting, and splendour of young adventure have accompanied their laborious resurrection from the harbour slime or the delirious rattle of the cable through the hawse-pipe at the long voyage's end! . . . Well, here they are now at their last long anchorage, after all those perilous tossings to and fro; instead of the long sighing of the tides, the faint roar of the traffic; instead of the sea-salt caking on stock and fluke, the smoke and grime of this yard in the Isle of Dogs. . . .

A beery old ruin of a man—shuffling, blear-eyed, horribly evil-looking—was lurking among the heaps of anchors, with a sinister senile giggle all the while on his lips.

"No," he said, "no, there ain't no way to the waterside, not out o' this yard, there ain't," and then broke off with that suggestive titter, as if he had some nasty secret he wanted to share with you.

"Can you tell me the name of the ship yonder?" I asked.

"Oh, yes!—she's the 'Rebecca,' she is. . . . Hee-hee!" He turned his red-rimmed eyes towards the proud vessel—as proud and fine as "proud Maisie in the wood walking so early"—again with that meaning giggle of his. "She won't be floatin' around so very long, *she* won't. Nor none o' them old sailin' ships won't. . . . Hee-hee!"

It was as if he said, "Ah-ha, my lady! You will go the same way as all the rest. Your bones will lie about the shipbreakers' yards . . . your strong men, your lovers, will be scattered near and far . . . and your anchors will lie here when you are gone and forgotten . . . Eh-hee!"

The memory of his snicker, like the low chuckle of a foul tide, still lingered as I left the yard. I turned and looked back once at the piled anchors, looking in the dim light like monsters of the primeval slime; and it seemed as if the faint echo of a forgotten chorus came blowing out of the pale sunset:

The sails are furled, our work is done—  
Leave her, Johnnie, leave her!  
And now ashore we'll have our fun—  
It's time for us to leave her!

I suppose one cannot leave this part of dockland without at any rate a passing glance at Chinatown. It is curious how strong a hold Chinatown seems to have nowadays on the popular imagination. A

good many people seem to consider it as the outstanding feature of the dock regions, whereas in point of fact it covers but a very small area, and it is possible to walk about Sailor Town all day and never see a single yellow man.

I may as well admit, first as last, that I know next to nothing about the inner life of Chinatown, nor have I the slightest desire to do so. I don't want to eat Chinese food out of imperfectly washed crockery. I see nothing in the least degree romantic about the pet particular vices of Chinese firemen, and the degraded white people, male and female, who share them; and (though I may be wrong) I am inclined to think that the exotic and Oriental glories of Chinatown, so far as Limehouse is concerned, exist mainly in the flamboyant imaginations of sensational journalists and scenario writers.

At any rate, there is no outward promise of any such thing in Limehouse Causeway and Pennyfields, which are the principal streets of Chinatown. They are furtive, dingy, unclean-looking places, lacking the least touch of Oriental colour and sunlight, such as one finds in plenty in the Chinatown of such ports as Vancouver and Victoria. Chinatown does not seem to harmonize well with the English climate, even when the sun is shining. In rain or fog its sordid dreariness is a thing unspeakable.

Perhaps it is partly that the London Chinaman always seems to wear European clothes—excellent clothes, too, which seem to suggest that he is prosperous and thrifty. You see no rags or dirt in Pennyfields, though in the “delicatessen” emporium at the corner opposite you may smell the most gorgeous stink that ever came out of the East. It

nearly knocks you down as soon as you cross the threshold, but it is worth daring for the sake of seeing one of the weirdest collections of Chinese eatables I ever saw anywhere : all sorts of horrible-looking dried fishes and reptiles, like the stock-in-trade of the Apothecary in " Romeo and Juliet " ; a peculiar kind of kippered duck, spreadeagled like a caricature of the imperial bird of Germany, with its bill and legs left on ; " leg of toad and eye of newt " ; and some mysterious black fibrous masses which look like old wigs or the stuffing out of a chair seat. I never dare venture on any of those unknown meaty or fishy comestibles ; but out of a collection of tinned fruit and vegetables—water lily roots, and water chestnuts, and bamboo shoots, which I have met elsewhere, and found not unlike corn in the cob—I bought " Li Chee in Syrup." It looked on the outside of the tin rather like a large raspberry or loganberry, but proved to be some kind of white, fleshy fruit with the stone taken out, and a flavour something like that of a mango. There are no curiosity shops like those on the Pacific coast, no windows full of ivory carvings and silks and coloured cottons ; only a few tea-bowls, and some rather handsome tall vases, and bundles of chopsticks, mixed up with boxes of betel-nut, and queer little sugar-covered cakes, and Chinese drinkables put up in old whisky bottles with the Chinese inscriptions stuck on over the old whisky labels. Every other shop is a restaurant, or " licensed to sell tobacco," or " licensed boarding-house for seamen " ; and, presumably, the notices being in English, they cater for white patrons. Inside one place a queer little wizened old man is

beating out with little hammers a thin tinkling tune on some kind of zither in a black and gilt lacquer case, and you catch a glimpse of a couple of bedizened white women coming down from the upper regions with a smartly dressed Chinaman in tow.

Generally most of the shops are shuttered—a thing which I never saw in a Pacific coast Chinatown. Whether anything illicit goes on behind those discreet shutters, or whether they are closed simply for the sake of privacy, I cannot say; perhaps a little of both would not be far short of the truth. Chinamen certainly dislike being “overlooked.” I remember once trying to get a photograph (when you come to think of it, it was really rather a rude thing to do) of some Chinese firemen in a Blue Funnel Liner, when they had just set forth their little handleless cups and were squatting down on their hunkers to afternoon tea. One of the ship’s engineers offered to get the photograph for me; but in the twinkling of an eye all the little cups were whiffled out of sight, and the malevolent looks that man got were enough to make your blood run cold.

“You should have jollied ’em a bit,” said the burly mate, when he heard of the incident. “Bless you, they’re all right, if you know how to manage ’em! It’s those engineers—they don’t like ’em. I’ll jolly ’em for you!” And he did—jollied ’em so successfully that I got an excellent photograph of them preparing some sort of vegetables for their dinner, all grinning from ear to ear, and the mate in the middle of the group doing the “jollying” act.

You see no silk-jacketed, wide-trousered Chinese



women in Limehouse, with sleek hair and a flower stuck coquettishly in it ; no funny little Chinese babies like little yellow dolls come to life. Such women as you see are white, and the funny little yellowish children are not more than half Oriental. Certainly the Chinese seem very fond of their children, and I have heard it stated that women of a certain class prefer Chinese husbands to white ones. They don't come home drunk to beat their wives when they have spent all their wages. But there is something intensely repugnant about the notion of an alliance between the yellow and the white races—especially, perhaps, between yellow men and white women.

### CHAPTER III

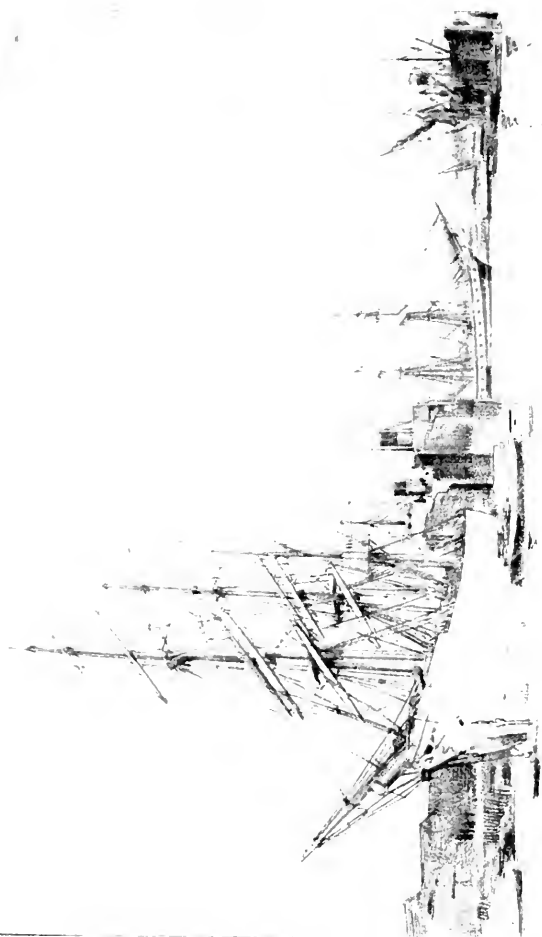
Surrey Commercial Docks—"Montrosa": the Fair Unknown—Dutchmen and Dagoes—Finns and Witches—Women at Sea—The Return—The Last of the Tea Clippers—The Modern Sailing Ship—Deptford Yard

**I**F you take a boat, say, at Millwall Pier, and cross over to the steps at the end of Redriff Road—or Swing Bridge Road, as it is called on the older maps—you find yourself in another hemisphere.

If the associations of Blackwall are with the East, those of Rotherhithe and Deptford are no less with the North and West. You find the traces of that association everywhere: in the names of the Docks themselves (Baltic, Greenland, Russia, Canada), in the types of men you see lounging about the street corners or looking over the rails of the ships in dock—fair-haired Finns, stocky Swedes, tall, blue-eyed Vikings, never a dusky or a yellow man—in the very names of the taverns and eating-houses ("Baltic," "Copenhagen," "Odessa"), in place of the "Stars of the East," "Jamaica," and "Cape of Good Hope" on the other side of the water.

They have a peculiar charm of their own, these Surrey Docks: an air of spaciousness and freedom, with their wide stretches of water not shut in by lofty warehouses and sheds, but surrounded by vistas of stacked-up deals giving off a pleasant

THE LOCH LINNHE AND CUTTY SARK IN ALBION DOCK





resinous odour. And they abound, as none of the other docks do, in picturesque glimpses of old timber droghers from the Baltic, with perhaps a pump windmill betraying their leakiness but giving an extra old-fashioned touch for all that ; and big four- or five-masted Yankee schooners, and here and there some lofty Clyde-built fullrigger with painted ports, the marks of the Cape Horn weather still upon her.

In point of age the Surrey Commercial Docks may claim priority even over the East and West India systems. The first real dock on Thames-side—other than the wet docks at Deptford and Blackwall Yards, which were only intended for the fitting out and repair of ships and not for the loading and discharging of cargoes—was that which was known originally as the “ Howland Great Wet Dock,” and occupied roughly the same ground as the existing Greenland Dock. The Howland Dock was constructed early in the eighteenth century, and later passed into the possession of the same Perry who built the famous Brunswick Dock at Blackwall. During the eighteenth century it was largely used by the vessels engaged in the whale fishery, which at that time employed no less than two hundred and fifty British ships ; and no doubt the Greenland Dock smelled to heaven when there were plenty of spouters at their berths.

There are echoes of this vanished whale fishery to be found in many an old sea song and ballad, notably the fine old shanty of “ Reuben Ranzo,” which tells how

Ranzo was no sailor—  
Shipped aboard a whaler——

and after a succession of harrowing experiences, including "lashes four and twenty," the captain "taught him navigation" and he became in due course "chief mate of that whaler."

Then there is the ballad of "The Sailor Laddie":

My love has been to London city,  
My love has been to Port Mahon,  
My love is away at Greenland,  
I hope he will come back again . . .

The last verse establishes a definite connexion with London River:

Come you by the Buoy and Nore,  
Or come you by the Roperie,  
Saw you of my true love sailing,  
Oh, saw you him coming home to me?

The old sea song, "The Whale," or "The Greenland Fishery" as it is sometimes called, describes how one Captain Speedicut's ship, "the 'Lion' so bold from England bore away," to

the cold country where the frost and the snow doth lie,  
Where there's frost and there's snow, and the whales they do blow  
And the daylight's never gone—  
Brave boys—  
And the daylight's never gone.

The song almost certainly originated as an English song, and the reference to Stromness in some versions has probably crept in later. It is traditional in Somersetshire as well as at sea, and the date mentioned in one variant, 1861, is most likely intended for 1761, when the British whale fishery was at the height of its prosperity.

With the passing of the Greenland fishery, grain and lumber became the chief cargoes that were

discharged at Greenland Dock ; and grain and lumber (chiefly the latter) remain the great interest of the Surrey Commercial Docks right down to the present day.

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“ We mostly puts the old sailers in Lady Dock,” a dock official once told me when I asked him where some ship I was looking for was lying. They could not choose a haven more fitly named.

It was in Lady Dock that I came across “ Montrosa,” and I always think of her as the Unknown Lady.

She had been in dock some little time, and was likely to be there some time still, for the boom in tonnage which had brought her to London with her last cargo was over.

She was a small ship by comparison with the big Clyde “ four posters ” of the 'seventies and 'eighties—perhaps a thousand tons or so, more or less—but she had about her a grace and a well-bred beauty that there was no mistaking.

Her figurehead was worn and weathered, so that the bare wood showed here and there through the shabby white paint ; but time and weather had been kinder to it on the whole than are their alien owners to the figureheads of some old ships I have known, who daub them so generously with gaudy reds and blues that they look more like old-fashioned Dutch dolls than anything else you could imagine.

There was no one on board at the time but the cook, who was also ship-keeper, leaving out of account some unseen beings who were tapping and tinkering away somewhere inside her hull. The

cook was from the Aaland Islands, where the ship was registered : a loquacious person for a Scouwegian, and very full of indignation about the Finnish nationality recently decreed for the islands by some new self-determination arrangement.

He had known the ship, it seemed, twenty years ago . . . she was under the British flag then, he said in his broken English . . . a full-rigged ship, but the captain that had her at the time (he had shares in her) sent down the yards from her mizen mast . . . “ ‘ Montrose ’ she ban called then, not ‘ Montros-a ’ ” . . . you could see the name on the ship’s bell like that—“ Montrose.”

There it was, the old name, on the old bell that had counted so many watches ; and a brass capstan head showed that she had come from Barclay Curle’s yard in the early ‘sixties.

That was all. I never could learn any more of that ship’s history. She figured a year or two ago in the courts, in a case which turned on a rather out-of-the-way point of law, the exact definition of “ barratry.” She was abandoned by her crew, who alleged that she had struck a mine, but her owners, trying to repudiate a charter party, asserted that the crew had started the leak by removing a couple of rivets, which would have constituted the offence signified by the old phrase in charter parties—“ barratry of master mariners or crew.” But of her story under the British flag I could find nothing. Lloyd’s List told no more than I already knew. Even her builders’ records did not go back so far as that. There was a “ Montrose ” which belonged to Scrutton’s vanished fleet, sailing to the West Indies ; and another under a Liverpool house-flag



(that of Greenshields, Cowie & Co.). She might have been either of these ships, most likely the latter, for I find their "Montrose" referred to as one of the smaller and earlier ships of the fleet; or, again, she may have been neither. Queries in the nautical papers and magazines have brought forth no light upon her past. She seems a ship quite forgotten—like a strayed princess who knows nothing of herself but a name that was once hers, and a vague and shadowy recollection of a vanished splendour. . . . Where are they, all the captains, absolute monarchs in that little kingdom, who once trod her poop or sat at the head of the table in her tarnished little saloon . . . all the mates who ever cocked a critical eye at the trim of their yards or the set of a main royal . . . all the lively young brassbounders who filled her dark little half-deck with noise and mischief and the glorious dream which is youth? . . . Gone long since are those who were old when she was young; and those who were young with her are old men to-day—like her, perhaps, dreaming the long days by in quiet backwaters of seaports.

So many voyages, so many storms and calms, so many strange lands and strange seas, so many cargoes in so many far harbours, and here she lies, with all of them lost and forgotten—and her figurehead smiles its faint, enigmatic smile, gazing out across the murky dock water with the wide, blank, unseeing stare that has looked on so many changes and chances of the sea.

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Sailors classify the nations of Europe roughly as

Dutchmen, Dagoes, and Russian Finns. Dutchmen are members of any of the Teutonic races ; Dagoes belong to any and all of the Latin breeds ; Russian Finns are a class by themselves. The term Dutchman of course speaks for itself ; " Dago " is probably a corruption of Diego—just as " Ranzo " in the shanty is almost certainly a version of " Lorenzo," with all due deference to those authorities who identify the adventurous tailor with Daniel Rantzau, one of the national heroes of Denmark.

Dutchmen and Dagoes have for a long time formed the biggest proportion of sailing ship crews, even under the British flag. Dutchmen especially will take less wages and do not stick out for good treatment as English crews do. They are more docile and more amenable to discipline. The British sailor is still the same turbulent breed the Conqueror found in his newly acquired kingdom ; but nearly all ships' officers say the same : " When it comes to a tight place, give me the Britisher all the time." Dutchmen, with the exception of the Norwegians, who are still, as they have always been, among the finest seamen in the world, are what you might call a bit slow in stays, and there are many jokes at the expense of the heavy-witted Jon Smit and Hans Dans.

You sail in a packet that flies the Black Ball,  
You've robbed some poor Dutchman of clothes, boots and all,

says the old shanty ; and there was not a doubt that some of the more unscrupulous members of a foc's'le crowd would think Hans Dans fair game.

Dagoes are not popular at sea. They are given to panicking at awkward moments, and sometimes

to using a knife instead of their fists in a friendly argument. And of course they feel the cold much more than natives of northern latitudes. The French, of course, you can hardly classify as Dagoes. They possess some of the finest sailing ships afloat—notably the huge five-master “La France,” and those fine Nantes ships “Notre Dame d’Arvor,” “General Negrier,” and others. French ships go in a lot for black-and-white paint on their lower rigging; it looks smart, but old shellbacks distrust too much paint, as it often covers a multitude of sins in the way of rotten ratlines.

It is strange that the races which have in the past been among the cleverest and most daring of navigators—the countrymen of Columbus, of Cabot, of Bartholomew Diaz and Prince Henry the Navigator—should have in modern times so poor a repute as seamen.

You would hardly expect so small a race as the Finns to call for a separate classification, yet such they certainly have.

Finns are great witches. In fact, they had so bad a name among some old shellbacks that they did not like being in the same crowd with a Finn. They can do all kinds of uncanny things with the weather; and old salts can generally tell you yarns about being becalmed for weeks on end, or persistently hindered by contrary winds, and all because there was a Finn on board.

However that may be, the Finns are certainly coming strongly to the front as owners of sailing tonnage, and you see quite a number of handsome ships—generally old British ships—hailing from Åbo or Mariehamn. The Finns are good seamen,

and their ships are usually well cared for and well found.

It was on board a Finnish ship that I saw one day the surprising apparition of a white-aproned woman, sitting in the bows, over the anchor, her chin on her hand, looking as if she were lost in a homesick dream of Finland far away. She had a stolid, wooden, unexpressive face, and but for the apron you might have almost thought she was the ship's figurehead come up there for a rest. I dare say she wasn't thinking of Finland at all ; her mind may have been—probably was—a comfortable void. She was the cook, the mate said in his admirable English (Finnish officers have to pass examinations in English, French, German, and Swedish for their mate's ticket), and a very good cook, too. A curious life for a woman to adopt ! I don't know if her husband was on board in any capacity. If not, she must have been as well able to take care of herself as the lady in the " Berkshire Tragedy," who " died an old maid among black savages."

The surprising thing was to see a woman at all on board a Finnish ship, of all ships in the world, considering that the Baltic is the sea where maritime superstitions endure, if they endure anywhere in the modern world.

One of the most deeply rooted prejudices of the old-fashioned shellback was that which classed women with corpses (and Russian Finns) as unlucky shipmates, however attractive ashore. Where the tradition arose is a mystery ; but, whatever the reason, the fact remains that many seamen of the old school objected very strongly to a " petticoat "

on board, even when the garment in question belonged to the captain's wife.

Probably fewer captains' wives go to sea now than used to in the days of sail. Then, a sailor was so long away from home that his wife had to choose between enduring the discomforts of a nautical life and spending years at a stretch as a grass widow. Nowadays, a sailor's absence from home are, generally speaking, less lengthy; moreover, it is doubtful if such unsentimental concerns as big modern steamship companies would allow their officers to take their wives along with them.

Superstition apart, there was a certain amount of reason for the old sailor's prejudice. The chances of disaster were given an added terror when there were women to consider: especially in the days when the dangers of a sea voyage included possible capture by pirates or slavers.

None the less, there were plenty of captains whose wives regularly accompanied them afloat, and whose children were born on board ship and spent a good deal of their childhood there. If evidence were required, one need only point to the stately teak double bed which formed part of the captain's cabin equipment in many of the clipper ships.

The belief must have dated back several centuries, to the days when women seldom or never went to sea at all, and, had it not been deeply implanted, it could not have survived as long as it did the carrying of women passengers in the emigrant sailing ships of the nineteenth century. The unpopularity of woman afloat did not prevent her from being a very favourite theme in old sea songs, and the lady who "went to sea for love of he in

masculine attire " is found in more than one of those interminable ditties beloved of the shell-back.

In port, of course, Nelson's men were allowed the society of their charmers: hence the term "show a leg"—as follows: sailors in those days never wore stockings; and when it was time for Jack to turn out and begin his duties on deck, his lady was allowed to continue her slumbers a little longer. When the bosun came round to hunt out the laggards, the occupants of the hammocks were bidden to "show a leg"—and if the leg had a stocking on it the owner was left undisturbed!

There is one authenticated instance of a woman who most certainly was not a Jonah at sea. That was the wife of the captain of the American clipper "Neptune's Car," who, when her husband was suddenly stricken with blindness on a voyage from New York to San Francisco, herself took on the navigation of the vessel, and brought her safely into 'Frisco.

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"Alejandrina" was another interesting visitor to the Surrey Docks. Her original name was "Andrina"—I believe she was christened in honour of the daughter of a member of the firm which owned her—so that it didn't require much alteration to paint in her new one.

Hers was a strange history. Twenty years ago and more, when yet King Edward VII was hardly crowned, when the Entente Cordiale had not been heard of, and motor cars were still objects of derision when they tried to climb hills, when the Channel

flight was still undreamed of but by a few unregarded enthusiasts—twenty years ago, then, this “Andrina” ran aground, not very far from Punta Arenas, in one of those dense fogs which are as great a terror to the navigator of Cape Stiff as the biggest blow he can muster—possibly greater.

No doubt they tried all the usual devices to get her off, jettisoning cargo and anything else they could think of, and no doubt the captain suffered all the agony of spirit shipmasters go through under such circumstances. But in the end they had to give it up. She refused to budge, and the cost of a tow to the nearest port for repairs would have been as much as the ship was worth. So there they left her.

The silence of those desolate shores closed over her. The summer came with its scorching sun, the winter with his howling gales, his frosts and snows—and there “Andrina” lay, year in, year out, like Andromeda on her rock, waiting for some nautical Perseus to come and set her free. Perseus came in due course, though he was mighty leisurely about it: and fortunately the dragon was in no great hurry either, or there would have been precious little left of her for him to rescue. He was rather a prosaic Perseus, too, in the form of a couple of tugs from Chile, and he had an eye on a substantial profit out of the rescue.

She must have been a sorry sight, that once-proud ship; for twenty years the habitation of seabirds and of Patagonian Indians, each as dirty as the other. The Indians had picked her clean as a bone of anything they could carry away, and burned whatever they could find to burn; and there was

always the likelihood that she might turn out to be too badly holed to get her off.

But she wasn't—not a bit of it. All that she needed was a few rivets in her hull and a new plate or two—and to sea once more went "Andrina" under her new name and her new flag—a veritable Rip Van Winkle among ships.

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Fog lay on London River, and its drifting and uncertain coils made the ships in dock look more like ghosts and shadows than things of solid substance.

It was not just the day one would choose for dock-haunting. In foggy weather it is easier than you might think to make a false step and get into the water, and once in—as a dock policeman once put it to me—"you're lucky if you get out before they pull you out." But the purpose which took me there was something in the nature of a pilgrimage.

The policeman at the dock gate directed me to the spot I wanted without hesitation. "Been quite a lot askin' for her," he said.

She was lying in Albion Dock, along with two or three steamers and a fine Loch barque, the "Loch Linnhe"—a beautiful ship, which one would have lingered to see on ordinary occasions. To-day, she was passed by with but a glance; for she was not the ship I sought.

There she lay, almost concealed by the ugly carcass of a Swedish tramp steamer: a small ship, rigged as a barquentine, with the name "Ferreira" standing out in glaring yellow paint on her wheel-box. An old ship, and by the look of her drawing



near to the end of her tether . . . yet hers was a name which still sounds like a trumpet call to all lovers of lovely ships.

For this old "Ferreira," with her rutted decks, her blistered paint, her rigging all rags and tatters and "Irish pennants," her preposterous row of painted ports (latest freak of the Dago fancy), her figurehead, thick with clumsy successive coats of paint, showing a pathetic lopped arm as evidence of the gallant ship's latest struggle with the sea—this was none other than the famous clipper ship "Cutty Sark," one of the fastest ships that ever sailed under the Red Duster, as she has proved herself one of the best able to withstand the ravages of the sea and of the years.

Dagoes treat old ships as badly as they treat animals. It is always to me a sad thing to see our fine old ships sold foreign. There seems about this marketing of their old bones a something commercially callous—an ingratitude, an unfeelingness, towards the fine fabric which the skill and devotion of seamen have in some sort made a living thing. The ship leaving the slipways was like Galatea leaving the sculptor's hands; it was the sea and the seaman who breathed upon her and made her human. And to sell such a ship as "Cutty Sark" was like selling pieces of men's lives—it was like selling courage, skill, endurance, devotion, which had gone to make her what she was—and still is, for all her ruined beauty—the symbol of a great and vanished generation. But a ship sold to a Scandinavian is at least sold, as one might say, to a good home. The Scandinavian has the right sea tradition. His ships may be a trifle starved, but

they are seldom dirty. The difference between selling a ship to Scandinavia and to the Dagoes is analogous to that between selling an old horse to a poor country farmer and to a rag-and-bone man.

Still, the Dagoes must have in a way more feeling for our own old ships than we have ourselves, since they do at all events give them homes of a sort in their old age. The Dago who did the honours of the ship—he was a woolly-headed Portuguese, evidently with a strong dash of the African in his composition—had a genuine enthusiasm for her.

"We come through some terrible weather dis las' trip," he announced with many dramatic gestures; "I look death in de eye . . . maintopmast go . . . foretopmast go . . . everyt'ing go . . . water, water fore an' aft . . . oh, I look death in de eye, I tell you, sure. . . . An' dis ol' ship, she nevaire leak—not—one—drop! I tell you, if I rich man, I buy dis ol' ship. She ain' much to look at now—not 'nough sailor for kip 'er clean, see! But she fine ol' ship . . . if I rich man, I tell you, I buy 'er . . . but—I jus' poor sailorman, no can buy ship. . . . De man what was mate of 'er—'e come down one day to see 'er . . . 'e ol' man, grey 'air, an' when 'e see 'is ol' ship 'e cry. . . ." Slow tears of rage, so hard to shed . . . tears for beauty tarnished, for youth fled, for dreams perished!

I hear that the old ship is to be barque-rigged again, and given her old name. But is there in all this great and wealthy nation of ours no one who cares enough for our maritime traditions to buy "Cutty Sark" for the nation?\*

\* Since these words were written the hearts of ship-lovers have been gladdened by the news of the purchase of "Cutty Sark" by Captain Dowman, of Falmouth.

sailorman, no doubt, has said, like our woolly-headed friend, "If I rich man, I buy dat ol' ship." But the sea service seldom provides those who follow it with the wherewithal to buy ships. There is outcry enough when our art treasures go abroad ; but ships such as these are not the treasures of a few ; they are of the very blood and fibre of the nation. England might have been no less great without a "Blue Boy" ; she would assuredly not have held her greatness without ships like "Cutty Sark" and men like those who manned her. She is the last survivor of a great age—the age when British shipbuilders and seamen took up the challenge to British maritime supremacy, and won. The money which bought her would not be money wasted. She "nevaire leak." She has it in her to make good passages, even now. And when her day is done, there would not be wanting those who would buy souvenirs of her teak and copper as readily as the Naval Service buys relics of the old "Britannia."

"Cutty Sark's" history is too long to be told here. Indeed, there is enough in it for a volume. She traces her pedigree back through Willis's wonderful old ship, "The Tweed," to a French frigate, a prize of war, which lay in Bombay early in the nineteenth century. The Parsee firm which built "The Tweed"—the "Punjaub," as her name was first—are believed to have copied the lines of the nameless Frenchman, and the result was one of the finest ships in the history of the British mercantile marine. "Cutty Sark," again, was very largely modelled on "The Tweed." She was a noted ship both in the China tea trade, for which

she was first intended, and in the "Colonies run," and old sailors are still hard put to it to say whether she or the great "Thermopylæ" was the faster. Her wings are clipped now, her spars and masts cut down; but, standing by her poop, beside her pitted wheel, I seemed to see, as the long pageant of her life passed through my mind, her decks gleaming like snow as of old, her great courses bellying full and white in the wind . . . and to catch the far echo of a score of men singing out at the royal halliards.

I looked back as I went, before the hull of the tramp-steamer had quite hidden her from sight. The fog was growing heavier, and from the river the sirens of the groping shipping came with a melancholy frequency. She looked as she was, a ghost—a ghost come back for awhile to the scenes she knew in the years long departed. Yet surely it is not here, in these foggy, dismal waters, that her ghost should linger. Rather should she wave her farewell to Anjer in the scarlet sunrise—or flash for a moment, a gleaming vision like the dip of a sea-bird's wing, before the eyes of the drowsy look-out in the Trades—or off Dungeness signal a shadowy pilot before she fades, a mist, into the mist of morning—or stooping before the Westerlies, run, an unsubstantial wraith, white and fleeting as foam, between the piled-up mountainous seas of the Horn.

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I often think what a different sight a modern harbour would have been had the steam engine proved impracticable at sea and the sailing ship

continued her development from the point it had reached in the 'seventies. Imagine the docks crowded with great four- and five-masted sailing vessels like "La France," or "Kobenhavn," or that big German-built prize "Peking," which lay in Surrey Docks some time ago, or that "Preussen" which just before the war might be seen sticking on Dover cliffs; a prophetic symbol, had one but known it, of the fate in store for "Preussens" which try conclusions with the shores of Britain. What a forest of towering spars would have been there—what a network of standing and running rigging—in place of the stumpy pole-masts and gaunt ungainly derricks which meet the eye at every turn!

There seems to be a tendency to build rather more of these big sailing vessels of late years; and if, which seems at any rate a remote possibility, the coal and oil supplies of the world should in the course of years peter out in part if not altogether, it may well be that humanity may once again be glad to ask the help of what an American writer has aptly termed "God Almighty's wind." Should sail come into its own again, what form will the sailing vessel of the future take? Probably that of the big square-rigged auxiliaries like the "Kobenhavn," or else that of the four- and five-masted schooners, which have been so much more frequently seen since the war on this side of the Atlantic. They cannot compare for beauty with the square-rigger, but for all that they have a kind of austere beauty of their own. Men trained to squaresail don't take kindly to them as a rule, but from the economic point of view they have the merit of not requiring large and

skilled crews to handle them. It seems more than likely that they have come to stay.

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Nowhere, perhaps, do the associations of the Tudor adventurers gather so closely as at Deptford, the "depe ford" over the Ravensbourne which was known in Chaucer's day. Here it was that Queen Elizabeth came in state from her palace of Greenwich to dub Sir Francis Drake knight on board his ship the "Pelican," or "Golden Hynde," as she was renamed at Gloriana's whim. The "Golden Hynde"—"Drake's brave oak," in Cowley's phrase—lay a long time at Deptford, and she seems to have suffered the indignity of being converted into a sort of "Teas Provided" rendezvous. But they must have provided something stronger than tea, for it was during a drunken brawl with a person of low character named Archer, whom he met on a visit to the "Hynde," that poor Kit Marlowe came by his inglorious and untimely end at the age of twenty-nine. A brass tablet recently erected in the church commemorates the event and Marlowe's memory—but the place of his burial is unmarked.

In 1600 the East India Company established their first yard at Deptford, leaving it, however, a few years later for Blackwall Yard over the water. But the Royal Dockyard continued to build ships as late as 1869, the last ship built there being H.M.S. "Druid" in that year. It was at Deptford Yard that Captain Cook's ships, "Resolution" and "Discovery," fitted out for his last voyage; and the "Discovery" again fitted out in 1791 and sailed under the command of that worthy successor of

Cook, Captain George Vancouver, whose name is linked for ever with one of England's fairest island possessions and finest Pacific harbours. No trace of the dockyard now remains, and its site is occupied by the Foreign Cattle Market ; but a wonderful miniature model of contemporary date is to be seen in the South Kensington Museum, which gives an admirable impression of the old dockyard as it was when ships were building there.

The association of Deptford with that venerable institution, the Trinity House, should not be forgotten. In 1512 Sir Thomas Spert, the builder of the great ship "Harry Grace à Dieu," founded at Deptford the Guild of the Holy, Blessed, and Glorious Trinity, for the purpose, among other things, of maintaining beacons to guide mariners along the shoals and windings of the river. From these beginnings grew up the great organization which, under the Master and Elder Brethren of Trinity House, to-day controls all the lighting and pilotage of the English coasts.

The connexion with Deptford was maintained until quite recent times, including the annual dinner, with the ancient Trinity Grace, dating from the fourteenth century :—

Alla Trinita beata  
Da noi sempre adorata,  
Trinita gloriosa,  
Unita meravigliosa,  
Tu sei manna superna  
E tutta desiderata.—Amen.

There is little left of old Deptford nowadays, except the few old houses grouped about the triangular open space which was once (and still bears

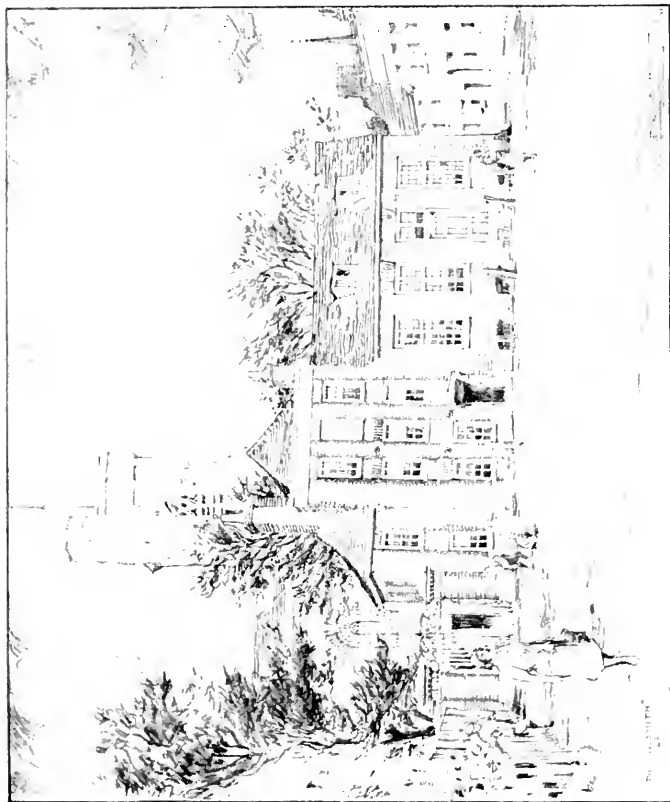
the name of) Deptford Green, and the fine old seventeenth century church, with its much older stone tower, rising at the base of the triangle behind the little old Carolean schoolhouse. This tower is believed to have been originally used as a beacon for mariners, which is likely enough. Many of the Cornish churches were undoubtedly used as lighthouses, and St. Helen's Church in York had a fire lighted nightly in its open belfry to guide travellers in the Middle Ages approaching the city through the forest surrounding it.

Deptford Church is full of the atmosphere of the days when Deptford was still the "navy-building town" that Pope termed it. Here are the wordy memorials of successive generations of master shipwrights, the lengthy Latin epitaph of Peter Pett, and that of Jonas Shish, master shipwright and friend of Evelyn the diarist. His epitaph, composed by himself on his deathbed, shows him to have been something of a versewright as well.

By sin I die, the wages due to all.  
By sin, as I, the Universe must fall,  
Yet, Holy Jesu, bring me to the throne  
Of Heavenly bliss where God doth reign alone,  
That I may sacred anthems always sing  
With Holy Angels to their Sovereign King.  
Once I was strong but am intombed now  
To be dissolved in dust, and so must you.  
In health remember still that latter end,  
That will beget care ne'er to offend.

There is a curious tradition recorded in local history to the effect that the great Admiral Benbow was buried at Deptford, and the testimony has been brought forward of local residents whose great-grandfathers said they had been present at the funeral. There seems to be no foundation whatever





ST. NICHOLAS CHURCH AND SCHOOLROOM FROM DEPIORD GREEN



for the legend, or for disbelieving the statement in the church of Kingston, Jamaica, that the admiral lies there. Probably the funeral the Deptford ancients remembered was that of Captain Benbow, the admiral's son, whose epitaph may be seen in the church to the present day.

In the church may also be seen the memorials of the Evelyns of Sayes Court, reminding us of the best-known, if not the most interesting, of Deptford's yesterdays—the sojourn there of Peter the Great, Czar of Muscovy, while he was learning the business of a shipwright at the Royal Dockyard. Nothing remains now of Evelyn's country pleasaunce, which he found so convenient a retreat in the days of the Great Plague, or of his bees working under glass, which intrigued Mr. Samuel Pepys so mightily ; or of his glorious holly hedge, four hundred feet long, five feet thick and nine feet high, “glittering with its armed and varnished leaves ; the taller standards at orderly distances, blushing with their natural coral . . . mocking the rudest assaults of the weather, beasts, or hedge-breakers.” Thus wrote Evelyn in his “*Sylva*,” doubtless having his own hedge in mind ; but the “rude assaults” of the Czar of Muscovy were to prove too much even for that formidable barrier. Plunging into such a prickly mass sounds an amusement rather like that of the gentleman who

Lived in our town,  
And he was wondrous wise,  
He jumped into a quickset hedge  
And scratched out both his eyes ;

but the Czar, assisted by a wheelbarrow, did it not once but many times.

Before the advent of the Russians, Evelyn had let the house to Admiral Benbow, and found him rather a rough tenant ; but he must have wished the admiral back again when his servant reported the hay that the imperial sub-tenant was making there. Both Admiral Benbow and Evelyn had a lengthy bill of dilapidations to present to the Admiralty when the distinguished shipwright and his retinue had departed. " Here have we right nasty people," complained Evelyn's servant, and the bill for " soyled and spoyled " furniture and carpets, for broken-down hedges, and lawns " spoyled by their leaping and showing tricks " on them, suggest that the epithet was justified.

Somewhere near Deptford Green was the " poor solitary thatched " house where Evelyn first saw Grinling Gibbons at work. There is some of Gibbons' work in the church, including a ghastly piece of macabre imagining on the theme of Ezekiel in the valley of dry bones. It used to be over the door of the little seventeenth century mortuary in the corner of the churchyard, and probably the stone " Jolly Roger " emblems on the gateposts were intended to harmonize with it.



## CHAPTER IV

River Reaches—Sea Saints and Waterside Churches—"Over the Water"—Thames Barges

SIXTEEN reaches in all lie between the Tower Bridge and Gravesend, averaging about a mile in length, with one exception. First—beginning at the Bridge—is the Upper Pool, or, as it is generally called, *The Pool*; next comes Lower Pool, whose name also sufficiently explains itself. Limehouse Reach, Greenwich Reach, and Blackwall Reach complete the big bend in the river made by the Isle of Dogs. Next, skirting the Silvertown shore, comes the euphoniously-styled "Bugsby's Reach." Who was Bugsby, and why should he, of all men, have been allowed to have a whole Reach all to himself?

Woolwich Reach follows, obvious and uninteresting enough; and so on to Gallions or Galleons Reach—both spellings seem to be admitted as correct. The origin of the name is obscure. For my own part, I prefer to spell my "galleons" with an "e," and to maintain against all comers that it was so called from some bygone prizes of war brought home by Elizabethan seadogs; but there is possibly some quite other, and much more prosaic, derivation.

From the elbow in the Kent shore which bears at the same time the beautiful name of Margaretness and the prosaic one of Tripcock Point, Barking

Reach (with its many odours, most of them nasty) extends to Halfway Reach—the “half way” being between London Bridge and Gravesend. Erith, one of the many old “hithes” or harbours along the course of the river, gives its name to the two succeeding reaches, the second of which bears the rather curious name of “Erith Rands”—a term which seems likely enough to have a common origin with the Dutch “rand” for a reef, well known in connexion with the Witwatersrand; the name may refer to some shoal or sandbank in the river.

Long Reach is, of course, so called because it extends for a distance of about three sea miles between Erith Rands and St. Clement's Reach. The connexion between St. Clement and the sea (of which more presently) is obvious enough, and it is quite likely that this reach may have been an anchorage. Northfleet Hope, and lastly Gravesend Reach, make up the tale.

The term “hope” for a sea-channel or reach of a river is one which occurs fairly frequently. It is found again in Lower Hope below Gravesend, and in Hudson's Hope in the far northern seas. Whether it is connected with the kind of hope that springs eternal, or whether it is merely a corruption of “ope,” and signifies a stretch of open water revealed by a curve in the channel, is a question the word-wise may answer.

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St. Clement is one of several saints especially associated with ships, sailors, and the sea. His special sign is the anchor, his martyrdom having taken the form of being cast into the sea tied to an

anchor, and the anchor sign is used to mark the boundaries of the parish of St. Clement Danes. It seems more than likely that some of the " Hope and Anchor " inn signs may have been originally representations of the saint and his emblem, which were given a new name at the time of the Reformation.

England's St. George is also, of course, a great patron of sailors. In the Mediterranean he was looked on as having special power over dragons and monsters of the deep, and he was also looked upon as a protector of land subject to floods—hence the dedication to him of such riverside churches as St. George's, Southwark, and St. George-in-the-East.

Normandy has her St. Michael in the Peril of the Sea ; and there is a whole calender of lesser Cornish saints : St. Gerrans, St. Piran, St. Mawes—the same as the Breton St. Malo—St. Keverne and the rest.

The principal patron of sailors in the old days, however, was St. Nicholas of Myra, to whom, among others, the parish church of Deptford is dedicated. I do not know what special nautical associations there are with the good Bishop other than his stilling of a storm, and the miraculous restoration to life of a little boy who fell overboard from the ship in which the saint was voyaging—all of which will be found duly set forth in pictured form on the ancient font of Winchester Cathedral.

I do not remember at the moment any riverside church dedicated to the great Fisherman Saint. There is Limehouse Parish Church, whose handsome tower is as conspicuous a landmark as was once the

masthouse at Brunswick Dock ; and St. Ann Shadwell, in the midst of the docks ; and St. George in the East, built by one of Wren's pupils, and not without something of the Wren dignity, though lacking the Wren grace. But of all the waterside churches of London perhaps the best is the little Church of St. John of Wapping, an unpretentious little eighteenth century building with a low spire, and a churchyard where the master mariners of a century ago still sleep undisturbed. Most of the churchyards have been made into gardens, and the change is in most cases all for the better. But that of Wapping still keeps something of its old-world peace. The river air blows through it and sets the long grass waving, and rustles the green leaves of spring over the graves of the master of the " Humility " of Alnmouth and all the rest of the sailormen who made their last landfall here generations ago.

I suppose most people have some pet particular daylight terror of their own—cats, or cows, or snakes, or spiders, or being in a railway carriage with the door shut. Mine—one of them—is the Black-wall Tunnel.

Reason may tell me that if I disappear into its yawning mouth in a 'bus I shall reappear in due course at the far end. Reason may argue as she likes, but I decline to believe her.

And those portentous domed blow-holes into it, like engine-room ventilators to the nether regions—with the fearful rumblings and reverberations which are generated in them by the mere passage of a pygmy horse and cart far below !—they are like something out of a bad dream, or a book about the



future by Mr. H. G. Wells. There are four Thames tunnels altogether by which one can cross the river below bridge ; but the only one I have ever been in is the old original Thames Tunnel—Brunel's Tunnel, from Wapping to Rotherhithe—and that was in a train. The railway took it over some years ago, and the weird sort of arcade or fair which used to be at its entrance has long been a thing of the past. It must have been a mildewy sort of affair at the best of times.

The place of the Thames Tunnel for foot traffic has been taken by the Rotherhithe Tunnel a little further along down stream, and there is also a foot tunnel at Greenwich ; but for me the best way of getting across the river will always be—unless in very wet or foggy weather—the good old-fashioned way of “ over the water.”

You follow a street—gritty with dust in dry weather, and slimy on wet days with the thin yellow dockland mud—that winds between the warehouses and repairing yards and dock basins until it ends suddenly in a flight of shallow, worn stone steps leading down to the river water when the tide is in, and the river mud when it is out. There are generally one or two beery beings of the wharf-rat type leaning against the low wall at the top of the steps, and a chattering bunch of amphibious urchins disporting themselves in their birthday suits and wrangling like a lot of young gulls over some treasure trove in the way of a derelict plank or a dead cat.

It doesn't look a very likely place to get across the river ; but if you make a funnel of your hands and send forth into space a hail of “ O-over the

water!" a boat will materialize from somewhere and put you across for a matter of a shilling or so, as near as the tide will allow to the very spot you want.

Many memories must be theirs, these old river stairs, for they, like the wharves, were there before the docks. Memories of smugglers and river pirates, of the pressgang storming through the riverside parishes and leaving weeping, wailing, and curses behind it. Memories of their palmy days when there were thousands of watermen plying their trim-built wherries between shore and shore, and between the stairs and the shipping moored in the river. Then, all the river steps were constantly busy with the comings and goings of boats, and crowded with seafaring folk of every sort—smart captains' gigs, ships' shore boats full of sailors in shoregoing rig, boats whose sullen rowers wore the livery of shame, taking out convicts to the prison ships, and a horde of crimps' boats swarming about newly-arrived craft, with plenty of liquor on board to get the men fuddled before they had so much as left the ship, almost before her anchor had touched bottom. Quaint old-world names they have, many of them, such as Cherry Garden Stairs, near to which the cherries grew for the delectation of Mr. Pepys and his friends . . . and Globe Stairs, hard by the old Globe Theatre . . . and Pageant Steps, recalling the water spectacles of bygone days . . . Cocoanut Stairs and Jamaica Stairs . . . and, perhaps most famous of all, Wapping Old Stairs, associated, as we have seen, with the grim ceremonies of Execution Dock. Chiefly, however, the renown of Wapping Old Stairs rests on the old song of the

sentimental school of Dibdin, rendered by Colonel Newcome at the Cave of Harmony with such distressing results :

Your Molly has never been false, she declares,  
Since last time we parted at Wapping Old Stairs,  
When I swore that I still would continue the same,  
And gave you the 'bacco box marked with my name.

“ Your trowsers I'll mend, and your grog too I'll make,” declares Molly in the song ; but it is to be feared that the grog-making would be more in the line of most of the Wapping Mollies of the period than the trowser-mending.

Last there are the little unnamed stairs not found on the maps—slimy, sinister-looking steps leading furtively up to deserted, tumbledown buildings with boarded windows, or evil little taverns whence in the bad old crimping days many a drugged sailor may have been hurried to the boat waiting at the stairfoot—to awake in the foc's's'le of an outward-bounder, a sadder and let us hope a wiser man.

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If one were to be asked what craft is most characteristic of the Port of London, the answer would be neither smart liner nor workaday tramp, neither tanker nor collier, squarerigger nor schooner, but the Thames barge.

No river scene is complete without its barges. They are everywhere—beating to windward up the reaches with brown sails spread, jostling the ships from all the seas in the dock basins, or settling down for the night alongside quiet wharves or flagstaffed pierheads, and everywhere helping to lend that

variety to the scene which is the great charm of London dock and river views.

The London barge has changed but little during the last century and a half. She is still to-day, in all essentials, just the same as you see her in E. W. Cooke's etchings, tacking about among the East Indiamen and seventy-fours as she does to-day among the liners and cargo-steamers. The outstanding feature of the barge rig is the "sprit" (or "spreet," as most seafaring men pronounce it), the diagonal spar on which the boomless mainsail is extended from the peak. It is a rig specially adapted for busy river traffic, owing to the ease and rapidity with which the big sail can be either brailed up or lowered from the peak by lowering the sprit. To look at, the latter process is by no means workmanlike, the effect produced being rather like the week's wash in a strong wind ; but it seems to act all right. In addition to the sprit mainsail, all barges carry a small spritsail abaft the tiller, the mast being in many cases fixed to and working with the tiller itself.

There are two distinct types of London barges : the topsail or seagoing barge, which carries a gaff-topsail and jib, and the river or Medway barge which has a pole mainmast and no topsail. The topsail barges ply along the south and east coasts, as far west as Southampton and as far north as Lowestoft, and even on occasion trade foreign once in a while to Rouen or Havre or Dunkirk. The Medway barges seldom go farther afield than the Thames estuary and its tributary creeks and rivers. There is a subdivision of the Medway class of barge known as a "stumpy," which is really a sort of half-way

house between a barge and a lighter ; in fact, you might almost call her a lighter with sails. But it is surprising what rapid progress these clumsy-looking craft can make, and they share the excellent qualities of the barge proper when beating to windward.

It is surprising what an amount of cargo a barge can pack away into her capacious hull, and to see the number of bricks that can be unloaded from one is something of an eye-opener. She can stand plenty of weather, and to see a big topsail barge snoring down Channel deep-laden and with her lee rail under water, the seas washing continually over her closed hatches, is an inspiring sight in its way. She seems to have survived the general depression in the coasting trade ; at all events, there are always plenty of barges to be seen between London and Gravesend.

Barges make ideal cruising yachts for many reasons. They combine shallow draught with roominess of hull, and they will easily stand a little additional head-room. Many people go in for an auxiliary engine, but as a matter of fact a barge goes so well to windward that the engine need hardly ever be used except in flat calms. And for their size they need very little help to handle them.

There is always something about a Thames barge which strikes a homely note—especially when you see her snugly moored alongside some quiet little pier when evening is coming on. Sometimes there is a cosy glimpse of a lighted cabin, and a savoury smell of something cooking for supper, the homely round face of a brown teapot, a woman's apron about, for the barge skipper often takes the missus along with him. Perhaps there may be other and

less pleasant concomitants of barge life at close quarters—such as rats or cockroaches, or insects more obnoxious still. But what would you? At any rate you can't see them. . . . The barge has not the glamour of strange seas, the phantom lure of far horizons; she has no dark tale to tell of wild doings in foreign Sailor Towns. But she has her own homely charm—such charm as dwells by little wharves, and tarred shipboarded inns, and creeks where the sunset flames along the levels, and there are lights and singing o' nights in the leaning old waterside taverns.

## CHAPTER V

Tilbury—Gravesend—The Princess Pocahontas—At the Turn of the Tide

OF all the strange spots where people first set foot on English soil, Tilbury must surely be one of the strangest. But as indeed so often happens, most likely not one in a thousand of the folk who come to Tilbury ever sees it at all. Perhaps it is night, and the Thames shore a mere windy desolation under the stars ; or even, by daylight, it remains a confused impression of low, flat shores, a big railway station, Customs formalities, the hurry and bustle of farewells and greetings—and then the boat train whisks them off from Tilbury without them having ever really looked at it.

They are talking of constructing a deep-water landing stage at Tilbury where liners may berth at all states of the tide, but to Tilbury itself it will probably make little difference.

It is a strange and desolate region, yet not without its own quality of fascination—a region of flats and marshes, cried over continually by seabirds and by the boisterous winds that come piping in from the sea and tossing the trees over the deserted gun-emplacements of Tilbury Fort. The little Fort has a handsome Carolean gatehouse adorned with stone trophies of cannon and Roman armour. It is “ in

the style of Coehorn and Vauban" (low be it whispered, but I have known the time when I should have said Coehorn was a musical instrument!) and several kings have altered and added to it. But now it is empty and desolate—desolate with the dismal desolation of disused military places, with the shrouded forms of a few forsaken guns squatting swathed by tarpaulins like veiled Eastern mourners.

For its size it has many associations, beginning with the days when Wat Tyler halted there with Jack Straw and his rabble rout on the way to London. And here, of course, Queen Elizabeth reviewed her troops at the time of the Armada. I believe those people who seem to spend their time unsettling other people's cherished beliefs have discovered that she never did anything of the kind, and that the winds blowing over Tilbury marshes never caught those gallant words of hers that ring in the pages of history. It was not the present Fort which stood there in Queen Elizabeth's day, but a mere blockhouse of which the great Earl of Leicester was governor.

Tilbury Fort, of course, has also its literary fame, for was it not here that the fair Tilburina in "The Critic" went mad in white satin for love of Don Whiskerandos? The Fort is all that there is of old Tilbury, but for the little inn so aptly named the "World's End," a romantic place of many gables and windows that must wink warmly on cold nights across the desolate marshes.

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Gravesend is a curious little town—part country



town, part seaport, part seaside resort which has somehow missed fire. You pass abruptly from the steep sloping streets where the air is unmistakably flavoured with salt, with little houses whose open doors give glimpses of nautical interiors, to prim, decorous terraces and crescents of the Regency period, like bits of Bloomsbury dumped down on the Thames shore. There was a day when an attempt was made to "boost" Gravesend as a resort, about the time when the ingenious Rosher, some time in the 'thirties, turned a disused chalk-pit, such as you see beside the railway going down to Gravesend, into the once-renowned Rosherville Gardens, now a vanished glory, where, so a Gravesend worthy regretfully informed me, there "used to be monkeys an' all." But Rosherville, "monkeys an' all," is shut up and dead. Its last phase was as a cinema studio, but that too has passed away.

Nowadays the pier, a picturesque little affair on squat Doric columns, is mainly used by the pilots—"mud pilots" waiting for ships to take up the river, and Channel pilots who have come up from Dungeness waiting for a ship to take back. Pilotage above Gravesend is compulsory, and even coasting skippers with a pilot's ticket have to take a "mud pilot."

Pilots and shrimps might be described as the principal products of Gravesend. You see the shrimp everywhere. Even the local ale is called "Shrimp Brand," and if the people of Gravesend consume anything like a proportion of the shrimps you see in the various wholesale and retail shrimp emporiums they must nearly live on them. Shrimps, pilots—and caged larks! I never saw so

many caged larks anywhere as there are in Gravesend. Wherever you go, you are haunted by the plaintive cries and flutterings of these little captives in their tiny wired cells. What is the reason of it, I wonder ; are larks cheap and numerous in Kent ? At any rate it is one of my few grievances against Gravesend.

Fielding, in his " Voyage to Lisbon," speaks of Gravesend in no very complimentary terms. But then his feelings may have been coloured by his wife's toothache and the discomfort and extortion which troubled him on the voyage. The craft "called a cod boat" which thrust her bowsprit through the cabin window must have been the finishing touch.

But it is really a pleasant little place on a bright day, though it depends very greatly on its weather moods—and perhaps on one's own moods. Under a grey, stooping, melancholy sky that tones the river down to the same grey and melancholy colour, it seems a place full of sad farewells. But when the sun breaks through and flashes on the white caps of the river, then the wind seems a jolly rover whistling in rope and spar, and calling young adventure on the long road round the world.

I wonder what mood the river was in when first the Princess Pocahontas saw it, coming home to Gravesend with her English husband, there to end her short life far from her native forests. The old church of St. George, where she lies buried, is singularly bare of monuments, the reason being a disastrous fire in the eighteenth century. The actual site of the Princess's grave is lost ; but a brass in the chancel wall commemorates her short life



THE "THREE DAWNS," GRAVESEND



and early death at the age of twenty-two "when about to revisit her native land," and the Colonial Dames of America have given recently a stained-glass window in memory of her, having for its subject the story of Ruth.

Poor Princess—poor "Belle Sauvage!" like Ruth,

sick for home,  
She stood in tears amid the alien corn.

The mysterious blight which always withers the Red Man's kindred when they dwell beneath a roof did not spare her. One pictures her suffering the weird physickings of the day with native stoicism; with great dark eyes constantly turning to the grey river which to her was but the road which should one day lead her back to her homeland.

Gravesend is at its quietest when it is almost low water. Rows of tugs lie out in the water like bell boys waiting for messages in an hotel corridor. A liner in the river has the Blue Peter flying at the fore, and a tender alongside; and a big freighter is showing her pilot flag and making ready to get her anchor.

The ships swing idly round athwart the stream. The tide is on the turn. A great activity begins to manifest itself among the tugs. One bustles off, and with much fuss and flurry takes the liner's hawser and swings her round into midstream. Down comes the Peter. There is a flutter of white from her rail, answered from the tender, and away she goes Norewards. A motor boat with a brass-buttoned pilot darts out from the pier: he jumps for the Jacob's-ladder of an incoming steamer, and away shoots the boat on the instant. It is a demonstration in the art of boarding moving ships

to see a Thames pilot come on board. Barges begin to move up river with the tide. The great procession has begun again—the unending procession of Britain's shipping which has been going on for so many centuries, the same yet not the same—the pageant of London River.

## PART II

### DAYS HERE AND THERE

#### CHAPTER I

Liverpool and the Western Ocean—The Charm of the Linc—Black Ivory—Coasting—Fifty Years Ago—The Black Ball Line—James Baines, the Ship and the Man—Yankee Buckoes and Western Ocean Blood Boats—To Australia in a Black Baller—Paradise Street—Bound for 'Frisco

**T**HE spirit of Liverpool is the spirit of the Western Ocean. Her ships and her seamen may sail to every harbour in the seven seas—to Half Jack and Äbo, to Hakodate and Palembang and Malacca—but it is the Western Ocean which has set his seal upon her for all time. The Western Ocean, stern, strong, and terrible even in his repose—with his fogs and ice, his storms and hurricanes, praising the Lord—a breaker of strong ships, a maker of strong, resolute, iron men. The Western Ocean is no place for weaklings. He flings unseaworthy ships contemptuously aside as broken toys; he tries men in a test from which they come out failures or conquerors.

It is the Western Ocean that has brought Liverpool her greatness, as he breaks and makes her ships and her seamen. It is the business of the Western Ocean that has built up her wealth—emigrants, cotton, and grain. Hers, in her early days, were

never the barbaric pomps and splendours of the Indies. The pagoda tree showered down gifts of gold and silver at her christening feast. No ivory, apes, and peacocks made wonderful her wharves; no spices and strange woods, no lacquer and brassware, no fragrant sandalwood nor rich dyes, no bales of priceless rugs camel-borne over the Asian deserts.

It was soon sterner stuff, yet no less the stuff of romance, that the foundations of her greatness were laid. Strength and speed, strength and hardihood in her seamen, strength and swiftness in the ships they manned—these have been the qualities Liverpool has asked throughout her history from the ships and men to whom she owes her pride of place among cities, and half the merchant princes of Lancashire their wealth.

Strength and speed, obviously enough, impress even the most casual of visitors to the docks of Liverpool in their modern manifestations. I suppose in a sense there is no waterfront so well known to the general public as that of Liverpool—to people, that is, who have no special business there nor any particular interest in or knowledge of ships. A ride along the Overhead Railway is one of the "sights" of Liverpool; and if you want to realize just how ignorant of its birthright an island race can be, take a ride on that railway and listen to the comments made there, and you will probably get a good idea of it.

The ignorance of this people concerning the shipping which is its very life is truly a terrible thing. I read a book lately, published by a firm of reputation and written by an author of literary ability, in which the hero (or heroine, I forget which) was describ-



as proceeding from Trafalgar Square to the Embankment, and there beholding "a great ship" close to the shore, with "swarthy foreign sailors at work upon her decks." I wonder what that author really had in her mind. H.M.S. "President," probably, with the R.N.V.R. at drill for the "Royal Sovereign" bound foreign away on a seven-and-sixpenny Great Circle to Southend and back. The same daring writer also beheld "re-sailed fishing boats" darting hither and thither in London River. What sort of a catch they expected she did not mention: possibly it was the Green Seal!

To the real lover of ships, lines and ships of war are interesting in precisely inverse ratio to their attractiveness to the generality of folk. People who know not a ship from a sardine-tin will swarm over the latest thing in leviathans with appropriate exclamations of admiration, and now about as much when they have finished as—well, as the average liner passenger! I once heard a young lady—somewhere off the coast of Newfoundland it was—announce with the pride of discovery, "Just fancy! How thrilling! We're on the Logger Bank!" and another fair young thing who had been making the running with Mr. Sparks, the wireless operator, exclaimed with the right nautical air, "We've just been forward, seeing the wireless"—the wireless cabin in that particular ship happening to be situated right away aft.

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It were a foolish affectation, worthy of such cranks and *poseurs* as wish to return to the habits of the Middle Ages in dress and other details, to deny any

measure of beauty to the steamship—intrinsic beauty, that is, apart from the beauty of association with which the sea endows upon occasion the ugliest craft that floats.

The journalese phrase is not often well chosen ; but the threadbare cliché of “ Atlantic greyhound ” is for once in the right place. There is a kind of stark, stripped beauty about those long, lean hulls with their slim, keen cutwaters and gracefully sloping counter. The so-called “ cruiser stern ” is an abomination. But take the hull of one of the older Atlantic liners, the old “ Teutonic,” for instance, whose career (one of the longest and finest a steamer ever had) was ended a year ago when she was sold for breaking-up to a continental ship-knacker : it has not the beauty of the old sailing ship, not the generous curves, the wealth of detail of the early East Indiaman or ship of the line, not the grace of the sailing clipper ; but in its way and for its purpose it was perfection. Its beauty is the beauty which always belongs in some sense to a thing excellently designed for its purpose.

But for those huge, and so essentially German, monstrosities of which we see and hear so much nowadays I cannot profess any enthusiasm. Their bigness leaves me unimpressed ; their splendours leave me cold. One fancies the sons and daughters of the Fatherland gazing dutifully up at their tiers of decks, the vulgarly flamboyant scrollwork on their portly bustles, and murmuring respectfully, “ Kolossal ! ” Yes, they are kolossal, but they are not ships. Had I all the wealth of the movies, I would not spend some hundreds of it on a suite in one of these bloated, lumbering floating hotels and

paradises for profiteers, which cannot berth without a swarm of tugs to haul them about, and wallow as helplessly as stranded turtles on the slightest provocation. Of their magnificence I say nothing ; as ships I maintain that they are, and always will be, atrocities.

There is perhaps no port which provides so admirable a setting for liners as Liverpool. They look "right" there, somehow, in proportion. The breadth of the river makes a roomy stage for them, and the dignity of the new waterfront is in keeping with their largeness. But, when all is said, liners never look at their best in dock. When they are coaling, they are positively indecent ; when they are being berthed by half-a-dozen fussy, snorting little tugs, they are like nothing so much as Gulliver a captive among the Lilliputians. They need movement to give meaning to them, to justify their being.

I keep stored away a mental picture of the "Mauretania" striding down the Irish Sea, reeling out the miles behind her, only a month before the Great War was to call upon her strength and speed for greater uses even than that of making record passages. She looked beautiful then, with her blue ensign flying from her monkey-gaff, and her immaculate paintwork flashing back the June sun—the wind and the grey wind-shepherded clouds seeming to hasten with her—a picture of effortless, assured efficiency in her particular sphere.

There is invariably an interest, too, though strictly speaking it has nothing to do with docks, in seeing the departure of a great passenger liner—a thrill which communicates itself to, which can certainly be

more enjoyably felt by, those not intimately concerned. However close the achievements of speed may draw the ends of the earth—though people talk to one another from New York to Liverpool as once they never dreamed of doing over as many yards—still there is something in our humanity, some inherited, some instinctive response to a symbol, which makes us thrill at the sight of the slowly broadening stretch of water opening as the ship gathers way between her and the land she is leaving. To some it may mean much, to others little; to some it may be but an ordinary incident of business or pleasure, to others a breaking loose, a shaking off of bonds. To some it is parting—and that strip of dirty river water in very truth the “unplumbed, salt, estranging sea.” What wonder, then, that such a moment should bring always with it a silence, a catching of the breath, the sudden tears stinging the eyes, blurring the vision?

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Liverpool, like other ports one might name, has indeed her African associations, quite other than those by which the sister port of Birkenhead is said to have acquired the nickname of “Monkeytown.”

Birkenhead, and the Mersey generally, is of course intimately associated with the Elder Dempster line of steamers to West Africa, and in the beginning of the trade, the story goes, there was quite a roaring business done in monkeys. The captains always used to ship a nice consignment of monkeys on their own account, what he could dispose about his own quarters—in old days, what could be stowed

along the break of the poop—being the captain's perquisite. However, they brought so many monkeys that, according to the inexorable law of supply and demand, they created a slump, and the time came when monkeys were going in Birkenhead at sixpence each. Hence, of course, Monkeytown. The story sounds like one which was invented in the days when Birkenhead and Liverpool were rivals rather than sisters; but it still flourishes. Birkenhead nowadays ought to be called Cowntown rather than Monkeytown, for its special association is with mobs of tossing horns and terrified rolling eyes, and the unmistakable whiff of the cattle boats.

But the early connexion with Africa from which I have digressed is the trade in black ivory, which in bygone days was by no means unknown to her. Few of her existing docks—except, possibly, the old Salthouse Dock, of which more presently—can have seen much of the poor bewildered “prime niggers,” shivering in the grey Northern weather, and rolling their wild, bewildered eyes—as wild and terrified as those of the Argentine steers—upon the strange shoreline of the Mersey estuary. But I remember reading, years ago, in a cheap paper-backed edition I bought in a moment of desperation at a village shop, one hopelessly wet holiday-time, a forgotten novel of (I should think) the “Ten Thousand a Year” period. Its author I cannot remember—I am not sure it was not by that prolific author “Anon”—but its title, if I am not mistaken, was “John Manisty, Liverpool Merchant.” It was an incredibly prosy novel, and horribly printed on bad paper; and I remember so little about it that

I think the weather must have taken a turn for the better before I finished it. But the one part of it that found permanent lodgment in the scrap-heap of memory was the statement that there are—or were when the book was written—still to be seen in the neighbourhood of the Goree Piazza the barred dens where the slaves were, so to speak, put into cold storage during the process of transhipment to the plantations which were their final destination. Whether those places still exist I cannot say. I have never looked for them, for the simple reason that the scrap of memory only came to the surface while I was writing these pages.

At any rate, though one may smell many and various smells in Liverpool, it is something to be thankful for that the acrid odour of crowded African humanity is not among them. People who made fortunes out of slave-dealing no doubt thought themselves just as good as anyone else ; and so no doubt they probably were. They acted according to their lights, and the standards of the age they lived in ; and the same may be said of the officers of the ships which engaged in the trade. And after all it must be remembered that it was not really an idyllic, Golden Age sort of existence from which the slave was torn away. Generally the slave was in the first place a black chief's prisoner of war ; and the alternative for him was between being marched down into the hold of a slave-ship and converted not over humanely into bodily sustenance and personal adornment for his captors.

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In the good old days—say, ten or twelve years

ago—you could choose your special fancy out of a round dozen coasting lines sailing out of Liverpool, and—for an expenditure of somewhere around fifteen shillings a day—enjoy to all practical purposes just the same sort of a holiday as the millionaire in his steam yacht—only rather better, for the passenger-and-cargo coaster is after all a real ship, whereas the smartest steam yacht afloat is no more, ultimately, than a costly plaything. How jolly they were, those pleasant little coasting cruises—now, alas, like so many simple, pleasant and vanished joys, classed as “pre-war!” Will they come again, I wonder, now that the Ministry of Transport is gone, having done more than the Hun to kill the coasting trade? I wonder; it is easier to kill a trade than to revive it.

You went aboard your chosen packet in Bramley-Moore, or Nelson, or Trafalgar, or whatever dock she might be lying in, with a solitary dignified leisure quite unlike the portentous fuss which attends the sailing of a liner. Sometimes it might be after dark, the dock lights and the ships’ lights throwing long, wavering reflections upon the dark, still dock water—or it would be morning, and a cold wind ruffling the grey water and hurrying the grey clouds, and making the tossing bell buoy reel and clang. What a sense of freedom was yours! How good the ham and eggs tasted that you got for breakfast—how sweetly you slept in your tiny state-room—or if your unaccustomed surroundings made you wakeful, how pleasantly you drowsed and dozed, woke and slept and woke again, while the little ship’s bell counted the watches, and the waves went hush-hushing under her keel! How lazily the hours went,

plugging along at a leisurely eight or nine knots, seldom out of sight of land, watching the passing shipping, and yarning with the fat, red-faced skipper who doesn't object to privileged passengers on the bridge.

You generally got roly-poly pudding, or "duff," on the bill of fare. It must be a tradition in the coasting trade, and I fancy it must have been there that the nautical chestnut originated which Mr. John Masefield has enshrined in "Captain Margaret"—the story of the skipper who, presiding at the cabin table, had a roly-poly duff placed before himself, the mate, and the solitary passenger. "Do you like pudding end?" says he to his passenger. "No, thanks," says the passenger. "Well," says the skipper, "me and mister here does!" so he cuts the duff in two and the passenger gets none. Another story which is very popular in coasting circles is that slightly Rabelaisian one of the lady passenger who was so greatly alarmed when she heard the crew ordered to "haul up the main sheet and spanker."

I remember one such cruise—it was only a month before the war—the Channel smooth as a millpond, night by night the sun going down in a pomp of golden glory, and one great star making a silver pathway over the waters. Such strange, perfect, magical evenings—with schools of porpoises hurling themselves head over heels in the steamer's bow-wave like things gone mad with joy. It was like a dream of the morning of the world. You would hardly have wondered to see a white, fair face glimmering through the glass-green bow-wave, and a singing mermaiden on every bird-haunted ness



and headland. . . . But that is long ago now—all gone, and the little coaster is gone too, as many another fairer and finer was to go in the years we did not dream of then.

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Cheap as coasting cruises were in those days, they were cheaper still in 1870, if one may judge from the figures quoted in a shipping handbook of that date. Then, you could go by steamer from Liverpool to London for 17/6, to Dundalk for 10/-, to Glasgow for 12/6. Presumably the passengers didn't get the run of their teeth for that ; but even making a reasonable allowance for meals, it must have been a wonderfully cheap way of getting about. And those know not England who know her not from the sea. More than her fat pastures, her sliding rivers, her green woodlands, I think it must have been that seaward aspect of England that made so many men desire her—desire and dream of her as a lover enchanted of a seamaiden—her headlands, twice daily wooed by the fierce Atlantic yet never made his own ; her golden beaches whispering secrets to the tides ; her aloof beauty, like that of a guarded princess ; her rocks and reefs like couchant watchdogs at her portals. I remember once in the days of the war, as the crowded train rushed on through a green English landscape, talking to a tall Australian soldier. He wasn't going back to Australia, he said. It wasn't that he didn't love Australia ; but—well, England had *got* him, somehow ! He had written to his people in Australia to tell them. He didn't suppose they'd understand, though. But, it was when he came up

the Solent in the hospital ship, and he saw it all so peaceful and green, and something inside him said, "This'll do for me—for ever!"

That same shipping handbook I have mentioned gives several interesting items of Liverpool information. The advertisement of the Cunard Line—headed by an illustration of a liner of the period, with one funnel, and barque-rigged but lacking a main course to make room for the funnel—gives the interesting fact that the highest fare (in ships "not carrying emigrants") was "Twenty-six Pounds, including Steward's Fee and Provisions, but not Wines and Spirits," of which, however, the intending passenger is assured "a plentiful supply is carried." Think of it—£26—not much more than a mere emigrant pays in these vaunted days of progress! And remember, too, that in those times a passage took ten days or a fortnight—sometimes more, very seldom much less. Of Canadian lines the Allan line is the sole representative. The White Star Line was not then in existence; but the now forgotten Guion Line (a French venture), Inman's famous Cities, record-holders in their day, and the extinct National S.S. Company, are all advertised. And it is interesting to note among the names on the Cunard sailing lists that of the "Samaria," which has just been given to one of the latest additions to the Cunard fleet. Otherwise, the names are all different. Why, I wonder? Is it on account of the superstition widely cherished among seafaring folk that it is unlucky to give a ship a name which has been held by a predecessor? Many sailors, I know, credit the ill-luck of Lord Dunraven's successive

“ Valkyries ” and Sir Thomas Lipton’s “ Shamrocks ” to this cause.

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In the Black Ball Line I served my time—  
Hooroar for the Black Ball Line !

so runs the old shanty, which has been sung on board sailing ships by hundreds of sailormen to whom the Black Ball Line itself was no more than a name and a nautical tradition. The funny part of it is that there are, or were, two Black Ball Lines, both of which were intimately connected with Liverpool ; just as there were two White Star Lines of sailing ships—the Liverpool firm which ran clippers to Australia in the ’fifties, and the Aberdeen White Star Line, whose name and house-flag, together with the distinctive green colouring of the hulls, is continued in the same firm’s line of steamers to the Cape and Australia.

The original Black Ball Line was one of the American lines of packet ships plying between Liverpool and North American ports, and was founded as long ago as 1816. These American packets were notoriously hard-run ships, renowned alike for their speed, the seamanship, and the man-handling propensities of their officers, and the “ toughness ” of their crews, which made ability to render a good account of himself in a “ rough house ” a *sine qua non* in a packet-ship skipper or mate.

References to the old Black Ball Line abound in the old Western Ocean shanties. Says the damsel in “ Can’t You Dance the Polka ? ”—

My fancy man’s a sailor  
With his hair cut short behind.  
He wears a tarry jumper,  
And he sails in the Black Ball Line.

And again, in one version of "Tom's Gone to Hilo"—

Yankee sailors you'll see there  
With long seaboots and short-cut hair.

The long seaboots (or "red topboots" as one version puts it) seem to have been a distinctive part of "Yankee John's" rig in the packet-ship days, and the "neck shave" must have also been popular in America even so long ago, to judge by the shanty-man's frequent references to "short-cut hair." "I know you're a Black Baller by the cut of your hair," says the policeman to the sailor in one of the many versions of "Blow the Man Down."

In the days of the packet ships nearly all the Liverpool lines were American-built and owned. The Swallowtail was another well-known line, which we find mentioned in conjunction with the Black Ball Line in the concluding stanza of the old sea ballad celebrating the exploits of the famous "Dreadnought." This story contains so many local Liverpool references that it may be of interest to quote a few of its many stanzas :

There is a flash packet—flash packet of fame,  
She belongs to New York and the Dreadnought's her name;  
Bound away to the westward where the wild waters flow,  
She's a Liverpool packet—oh, Lord, let her go !

Oh, the Dreadnought's a-hauling out of Waterloo Dock,  
Where the boys and the girls on the pierhead do flock,  
They will give us three cheers while the tears freely flow,  
Saying : "God bless the Dreadnought where'er she may go."

Oh, the Dreadnought is waiting in the Mersey so free  
For the Independence to tow her to sea,  
For to round that Rock Light where the Mersey does flow—  
Bound away to the westward in the Dreadnought we'll go.

Now the Dreadnought's a-howling down the wild Irish Sea,  
Her passengers merry with hearts full of glee,  
Her sailors like lions walk the decks to and fro—  
She's the Liverpool packet—oh, Lord, let her go !

Then a health to the Dreadnought and to her brave crew,  
To brave Captain Samuels and his officers too,  
Talk about your flash packets, Swallowtail and Black Ball,  
The Dreadnought's the flier that can lick them all !

The song goes to one of those regular droning “come-all-ye” tunes that the old-fashioned shell-back loved to sing—very much through his nose, through an interminable succession of verses, varied according to the individual performer's fancy with grace notes and quavers and “twiddley bits” to taste.

The American Black Ballers had a large black ball painted on the fore-topsail, the “Dreadnought” a red cross, and another line, the “Dramatic,” whose ships were called after Sheridan and similar celebrities, a black cross. The “Dreadnought” was undoubtedly a very fast ship ; but many authorities have questioned the accuracy of her “record” passage from Sandy Hook to Liverpool.

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But the Black Ball Line, which was Liverpool's special glory, was a different concern altogether. Founded in the eighteen-fifties by James Baines, the son of a Liverpool confectioner, it rapidly became one of the most famous lines of sailing vessels, not only in Liverpool, but in the world. The exploits of the Black Ballers, and of their rivals the equally famous White Star clippers, were told and sung wherever sailors met together in the ports of the seven seas.

The career of James Baines, the founder of the Black Ball Line, would provide a wonderful theme for the novelist's pen. Starting, as has just been said, from humble beginnings, he had established himself by the time he was thirty as one of Liverpool's leading shipowners. He seems, indeed, to have been a man gifted with something not far short of genius, as well as with certain of the faults and foibles usually associated with genius. His portrait shows a florid-looking man—one may hazard the guess that he was a decidedly "ginger" man—with the whiskers proper to the period, and rather profuse fuzzy hair with a "kink" in it. A rather dandified-looking man, on the whole, but with heavy pouches under the eyes that hint at burning the candle at both ends. A nervous, highly-strung fellow, "hung on strings," as the saying goes; and with the capacity to make either a big success of life or a big failure, but never to take the comfortable, safe middle course.

As a matter of fact, he made both; for, after having owned a fleet not far short of a hundred ships, and ordered ships from the foremost builders on the other side of the Atlantic, he died at last in very low water indeed. His face suggests the vanity which was undoubtedly one of his strongly marked failings, which showed itself in having his finest ship named after himself and adorned with his own bust by way of a figurehead . . . a sanguine sort of man, whose optimism might lead him to success or betray him to disaster.

One quality he most certainly had was a wonderful *flair* for a ship. The first of the famous Black Ballers was the celebrated "Marco Polo," one of

those remarkable vessels like the old "Tweed," whose turn of speed is hard to account for. She does not look in the least like a flier, to judge by the pictures of her; a heavy, square-looking, broad-beamed ship, much more of the old Indiaman type than that of the extreme clippers just beginning to come in.

The wave which lifted James Baines and his ships to fame and fortune was the great rush of emigrants to the Australian goldfields. The small slow vessels which had hitherto sufficed for the needs of the Colonial trade proved quite inadequate to cope with the new conditions; and for various reasons British shipowners sought new tonnage across the Atlantic. For one thing, the ships were wanted in a hurry, and American ships were built more quickly and more cheaply than British ones. But above all the demand was for fast ships, such as those which the Down-east and Nova Scotian yards had already been turning out with such notable success to meet the similar situation created by the Californian gold rush.

The "Marco Polo" was not specially built for speed, being a Quebec-built timber ship. But fast she was—probably her underwater lines were finer than her picture would seem to suggest. Under her famous captain "Bully" Forbes she made such notable passages that James Baines soon began to spread his legs wider, and he presently commissioned Donald Mackay, the famous designer and builder of clippers, to build for him four new ships calculated to "lick creation." These four ships—"James Baines," "Lightning," "Donald Mackay," and "Champion of the Seas"—were amongst the

fastest ships ever built, and although every stick of them has long since vanished, their memory is still cherished in the tradition of the days of sail.

Mr. John Masefield, in his "Sailor's Garland," gives a version of the Black Ball Line shanty which reads like a modernized one. To begin with, it is a combination of two distinct shanties, "The Black Ball Line" and the "Banks of Sacramento," the latter going to the well-known Christy Minstrel tune, "Camptown Races." Most people describe it as being derived from the last-named song, but as a matter of fact it is a question which of the two is the older. "The Banks of Sacramento" certainly dates from the late 'forties or early 'fifties; whether "Camptown Races" came earlier than that I cannot say, but I should doubt it.

But to return to Mr. Masefield's shanty—the words run :

From Limehouse Docks to Sydney Heads,  
We were never more than seventy days,

which is very unlikely to refer to the Black Ball Line, since only one or two of the Black Ballers ever sailed from London, and that was not to Sydney, but to Brisbane, during the rush to that port in the 'sixties, while the passages they made were over a hundred days. I should think Mr. Masefield's shantyman must have been confusing the Black Ballers with the Blackwallers, as the latter of course always sailed from London, and generally to Sydney. But the reference to the seventy days' passage may very well come from the original Black Ball song, since the line's Post Office contract guaranteed the landing of the mails



in sixty-five days, with a penalty of a hundred pounds for each day in excess of that time.

Both the "Lightning" and the "James Baines" met their end by fire: the former off Geelong Pier and the latter in the Huskisson Dock in 1858. She continued, however, to serve a useful purpose for many years, for her hull formed part of the old Prince's Landing Stage until that also was destroyed by fire in 1874. "James Baines" must have been launched under a fiery star.

Captain "Bully" Forbes of the "Marco Polo" was a well-known Liverpool figure in the days of the Black Ballers. He, like James Baines himself, was a bit of a soldier of fortune, and had many of the characteristics of the type. He liked to be in the limelight, and was something of a *poseur* in his way; but for all that he must have been a magnificent seaman, daring and reckless to a fault. Probably all the fêting he got in Liverpool went to his head; at any rate, he lost the Black Baller "Schomberg" on her maiden voyage, and from that time his sun began to set. He died—a broken and disappointed man—when he was still comparatively young.

By the way, the epithet "Bully" which is found in conjunction with the names of a good many well-known captains does not necessarily imply anything discreditable. It may, indeed, on the contrary, suggest a note, however grudging, of admiration. True, one might fairly conclude that a person who was popularly known as "Bully" this, that, or the other would be more or less of a "tough nut"—sometimes (as in the case of the famous Bully Waterman) decidedly more rather than less; but that is all it amounts to. "Bully" was, of

course, quite a frequent expression in the shanties, as, for instance, "Blow, boys, bully boys, blow"—and that brings us to the consideration of the "bucko" officer and the arguments for and against him.

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There is one line of the song in praise of the "Dreadnought" which is emphatically incorrect—namely, that which asserts how "her sailors like lions walk the decks to and fro"—which they most assuredly never did, unless the "Dreadnought" was a very different proposition from the usual run of Western Ocean "blood-boats." The greater part of a crew of packet-rats on the first day out would not have recovered themselves sufficiently to walk the deck like lions or anything else by the time the "Dreadnought" was "a-howling down the wild Irish Sea." Brought on board drugged or drunk, with nothing but the clothes they stood up in to protect them from the bitter North Atlantic weather—mental and bodily wrecks after a prolonged course of the delights of Paradise Street and Playhouse Square—their spirits further cowed by an impartial hammering administered all round by the "blowers and strikers," as the mates were facetiously termed—it would be a sick, sorry, and subdued crowd that tailed on to sheet or halyard with hardly enough life among them to lift a Western Ocean shanty.

It is one of the paradoxes of sea history that the ships of a nation which prides itself ashore on its devotion to democratic ideals should have earned an ocean-wide notoriety for the rough handling sailors received aboard them. What was the

reason for the man-handling habits of the Down-east or Blue-nose skippers and mates? It is hard to say. Perhaps the souring effects of successive generations of Puritanical upbringing may have had something to do with it. A Puritanical tradition undoubtedly encourages both a tyrannical habit of mind and a tendency to give other people "small Hell." Perhaps too the conditions of the Atlantic packet service tended to create a form of discipline enforced by the knuckle-duster and marline-spike form of argument. And the worst of such a tradition is that—once established—you have to go on with it. The result of the rule of the American bucko was that no man would ship before the mast in American vessels but thorough-going "hard cases" who knew what to expect—and generally got it. Such men would only regard as a fool or a coward anyone who attempted to treat them like reasonable beings, but they soon learned to respect a hard hitter and a good seaman.

The tradition of rough usage in American ships did not die out with the packets and clipper ships. Readers of Mr. Morley Roberts' diverting yarn, "The Promotion of the Admiral," may be assured that the living counterparts of Captain Blaker and his tough-nut mates might be found in ships sailing out of 'Frisco in the palmy days of the grain fleet less than a quarter of a century ago.

The "Philadelphia Catechism" quoted by R. H. Dana in "Two Years Before the Mast"—

Six days shalt thou labour and do all thou art able,  
And on the seventh holystone the decks and scrape the cable,

continued to be the guiding principle of the American

sailing-ship officer. American ships were famous for their snow-white decks and glistening brass and paintwork, but all these glories were not bought for nothing. They meant endless driving by hard-fisted mates, ever ready with fist or marline-spike or belaying pin, or a well-aimed kick from a sea-booted foot, who thought nothing of depriving the watch below of their few hours' rest in order to put an extra finish on the gleaming whiteness of the deck. They were fair to look upon, but in nine cases out of ten they were hell to those who sailed in them.

Some terrible tales are on record of certain Yankee skippers. The celebrated Bully Waterman is said to have had a man who had fallen from aloft stitched up in a bolt of sail and thrown overboard before the breath was out of his body, and whether this and many similar tales are true or false, there seems to be a pretty fair consensus of opinion that Waterman was a very hard case indeed.

A recent writer in the "Nautical Magazine" quotes Captain Clarke's book on "The Clipper Ship Era" in Captain Waterman's favour, and cites the portrait given there of the famous bucko in support of his plea. "The face," he says, "shows a striking resemblance to the portraits of Disraeli!" For my own part I can trace no such likeness. If it is like anyone, it is like a Velasquez portrait of Philip of Spain. It is a face striking and unusual, but terrible. Arrogance and cruelty seem indicated in every line of the nose and jaw, and the cold, cruel mouth, with its full under-lip

But there is a reverse side to the medal. The haphazard way in which the crews of merchant

ships had to be recruited very often made the navigator's lot, like the policeman's, "not a happy one." And since a ship, once she is at sea, has to be sailed somehow, it is hardly to be wondered at that the sorely exasperated officer of the watch in British and American ships alike sometimes lost patience with his unhandy crowd, and let fly with his fists.

Stories strange but true are told of the methods employed by some of the Paradise Street boarding-house masters in order to provide credentials for would-be sailors anxious to get a free passage out to the goldfields. A line was drawn across the floor, over which the candidate was called upon to walk a stated number of times, and a cow's horn was placed in the middle of the room, which he then solemnly circumnavigated. The boarding-house master was then able to swear without perjuring himself in the letter, that he had a prime seaman available who, to his personal knowledge, had crossed the Line twenty times and rounded the Horn a dozen. Moreover, most crews contained a certain number of men of the sea-lawyer type who might be expected, as soon as they touched land, to work up a well-merited hiding into a case of gross ill-treatment of an industrious and blameless mariner.

The bucko officers were, beyond a doubt, magnificent seamen. In their big, slashing clippers they cracked on to glory as few men have done before or since, and when our own China clippers wrested from them the palm of speed it was from rivals worthy of their steel. English officers who have been through the mill of the American sailing ship

may fairly claim to have proved their mettle by having been obliged to hold their own in a free fight with the crew several times a week.

I wonder what some of the real old Yankee buckos would have said to the ready-made officers who were being turned out recently to man America's new merchant fleet. The tale is told that a Liverpool pilot, bringing in an American ship, asked the officer of the watch to give him an azimuth. "Sure," said the obliging officer, and promptly vanished, to reappear shortly with the information: "Sorry, Pilot, but the stoo-ard cain't mix one of those!"

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I have before me a shabby manuscript book which contains an unofficial ship's newspaper of which an uncle of the present writer was editor during the passage of the Black Baller, "Young Australia," to Moreton Bay in 1864. A few quotations from its pages may be of interest here, though, strictly speaking, although a Liverpool ship, the "Young Australia" on this occasion sailed from London.

The "Young Australia" he describes as a "beautifully modelled clipper with lofty sails and admirably adapted for speed. The captain we found to be agreeable and wishful to make all on board comfortable; the crew are picked men, no lubbers amongst them, but we could do with a rather larger complement of hands. With regard to the passengers, who number two hundred and eighty-six, there are amongst them a fine lot of handsome young fellows and a few pretty girls, many of whom

are from Ireland." The number of passengers, by the way, was soon increased, for we read of the birth of a fine boy on the second day out. "The ship left Gravesend in a drizzling rain, enough to give any poor emigrant the horrors. . . . In consequence of the wet, sou'westers and oilskin coats were quite the rage, and crinolines were put aside for future wear. All seemed inclined to be jolly under every circumstance, and there was none of that weeping and moping amongst the female passengers that might have been expected. In the evening we were regaled by the pleasing and melodious strains of concertina, cornopean, flute, and fiddle, all playing different tunes simultaneously—and the well-known airs of 'Rule Britannia,' 'Limerick Races,' the 'Old Hundredth,' and 'Dixie's Land' were delightfully blended into one harmonious whole."

On May 14th, after a brief stay at Plymouth, to take on more passengers, "we were all mustered on the poop, and the roll was called, and at eight in the evening a tug was signalled for, and away we went Southward Ho ! . . . Cheer after cheer from our crew, taken up by the sailors in the other vessels, announced the fact that we were at last leaving our beloved country for a distant home. . . . On Sunday, our fat little doctor held Divine Service on the poop, being converted for the time being into an equally fat little parson."

The shortage of hands already referred to was remedied according to the usual custom on board emigrant clippers by the enrolment of about a dozen volunteers from among the passengers, who, says the candid chronicler, "commenced their duties with

vigour ; in many cases, however, their zeal wore off with the novelty, though we are glad to state that there are honourable exceptions to this."

" We passed ships," he observes, " almost every day, none of them being able to keep up with our vessel, of whose sailing powers we had all grown proud. Singular to relate, all that we signalled were sailing under the British flag, being a grand proof of the greatness of our commercial enterprise, which sets its sails to every wind that blows, and sends the blessings of civilization to every nation on the face of the globe."

An interesting account of the second cabin accommodation appears under the heading, " Our Office."

" The interior [we learn] is about the same size and shape as a Brighton bathing van. On one side are two shelves about six feet by two, intended as altars dedicated to Somnus, on which are nightly immolated the forms of our literary and pictorial editors. Boxes are stowed away in every available corner, while a large one is lashed up at the end, and forms a swinging desk. As we have neither deadlight nor porthole, ' no light but rather darkness visible ' is our natural portion, so that we have to burn candles whenever we write, even at midday. Overhead is a mosaic of tins and hams, pots and pans, which of course are a great assistance to thought ; the sides are decorated with a graceful variety of clothing, whilst a beautiful picture and looking-glass form a capital set-off to the whole."

As regards food conditions, these were very different from those which even steerage passengers



demand at the present time, for we read under the heading, "How we Dine":—

"Let a person who has never ventured on a long voyage . . . picture to himself the feelings of a newly-fledged second-cabin passenger on board an emigrant ship when the inward monitor begins to make its wants manifest. For some time the too sensitive stomach of the transformed landsman revolts at the bare thought of the salt pork, salt junk, salt fish, and salt everything on which he is now obliged to regale himself. After a week or two he looks with a wistful eye at the ship's butcher, as that functionary brings out the sheep and pigs to slaughter for the use of the first cabin, and when 'three bells' tells him it is dinner time he turns listlessly towards the mess-room. . . . After providing himself with knife, fork, and spoon, he sits down on a precarious form that groans under his weight, and there awaits the pleasure of the cooks and stewards. Presently, the stewards appear with soup or bouilli as the first course, the curious appearance of which is only equalled by its remarkable flavour. Same plates serve for course number two, which consists of salt junk, out of which we have serious ideas of making a pair of thick seaboots."

Carving models out of salt pork was quite a favourite diversion among old-fashioned salts of a facetious turn of mind, and I believe one of the Paradise Street hostelries used to display an example of this form of marine art. And while on this subject, reference may be made to another noted Liverpool product, namely, the Liverpool "pan-tile," which is no relation to the Tunbridge Wells

variety, but is simply the special brand of "hard tack" supplied to ships sailing out of Liverpool. The Liverpool pantile is famed above all its kind for its surpassing hardness, and many a seaman's best tooth has gone "west" in the process of tackling it.

"Our Live Stock" forms the subject of another article. "The stock farm on board, consisting of pigs, sheep and poultry, is, or rather has been, quite an institution; we say has been, for as two or three deaths have happened every week, whilst only one birth—and that unexpected—has occurred during the whole voyage, we have had in our own case familiar experience of the old saying, 'Always taking out of the mealtub and never putting in soon comes to the bottom,' for the miserable specimens still remaining are few in number. At the commencement of the voyage the sheep seemed pretty lively in their pens, probably owing to their being in the vicinity of the roystering blades who used the roof of their humble abode for a variety of purposes—for card-playing, reading, etc., during the day, and as a dormitory by night whilst we were passing through the heat of the Tropics. The poultry and ducks had a pen of much smaller dimensions, from which they looked out in a disconsolate manner—protruding their heads through the lattice-work in front, they raised their voices as if in protest against the hard usage they were receiving. Notwithstanding their being cooped up so closely that it seemed almost impossible to stir, we are credibly informed they found room to lay several eggs during their confinement.

"Under the forecastle is situated the pigsty,

containing a goodly number of fine young grunTERS, which, in accordance with their usual habit, keep all alive with their shrill tones of joy at feeding-time, and which seem to thrive well under the able management of the butcher and his satellite, the well-known Jemmy Ducks, whose place we should say ought decidedly to be among the fowls."

Here it may be observed that nautical pigs are invariably known as Dennis—hence the phrase, "If you do such and such a thing (hold on to the ratlines, for instance, and strike a rotten one), your name's Dennis,"—signifying, of course, that your fate will be similar to that which awaits the denizen of the sty.

Speaking of animals on board ship, I once knew a ship's dog in Victoria which had never been ashore for eight years. Apparently he had a true shellback's distrust of landmen; but, unlike most shellbacks, he carried it into practical effect. He had been lost when ashore as a puppy, and the lesson had gone home. How many humans, I wonder, could thus profit by experience?

The skipper of the "Young Australia" seems to have lived up to the Black Ball tradition as regards "cracking on," for we read of a good many topsails and to'ga'n's'ls being blown to shreds in the high south latitudes, and the ship made some good runs, one of 330 miles in twenty-four hours, which was pretty good going, especially for an American soft-wood ship which had seen several years' service. Like a good many of the clippers, she gave her passengers rather a bad time, cabins being flooded out over and over again. In bad weather, "charcoal was burnt between decks to purify the

atmosphere, it being exceedingly close. . . . As the hatchways were closed the atmosphere was stifling below, so enveloping themselves in waterproof garments of all shapes, colours and descriptions, the nether members being protected by leggings and seaboots, most of the male passengers sallied out on deck, resolved rather to brave the storm than get almost smothered below."

One other point alluded to is so characteristic of the wooden ship that the reference deserves quotation—that is, pumping ship. With the coming of the iron ship this everyday process became more or less a thing of the past, and also a good many of the shanties specially connected with it. "During the day," says our chronicler, "we hear numerous odds and ends of sea ditties, but to get at the full tide of sailors' song we must wait till the order to 'pump ship' is given. This important duty is performed at least daily on board the 'Young Australia.' Towards the witching hour of night the wild concert generally begins, and all the musical talent on board is brought out for the occasion. The ropes are seized by stalwart arms and pumping ship commences in earnest. The conductor for the night, generally a tall thin man with a loud voice and a large collection of songs, begins the solo, and the men who are working vigorously at the pump join with all their might and main in the spirited chorus. We might mention as peculiar amongst the other strange songs which we nightly hear, one which we think must be called 'Pat's Apprenticeship,' as it goes through the history of a number of years during which 'poor Paddy works on the railway.' What becomes of him eventually we

have not yet been able to discover, but we suppose that the line is not yet finished."

Elsewhere appears a note expressing a wish that someone would note down the words and airs of some of the shanties used on board. The word, "shanty," by the way, does not appear. If anyone had done so the result would have been an invaluable record, for shantying was at its best in such ships as the Colonial passenger clippers.

We may aptly take leave of the "Young Australia" with the following lyrical outburst :—

TO THE "YOUNG AUSTRALIA."

Here's a song to our craft,  
To our gallant little craft,  
Which sails o'er the waters blue,  
For she sets her sails  
To the favouring gales,  
And answers her helm so true.

Here's a song and "Hooray"  
To the gallant Captain Grey,  
Who commands this craft so well,  
For in spirit and skill  
And hearty good will  
He bears away the bell.

Here's a song to the crew,  
To the volunteers too,  
In friendship may all combine,  
And now we'll end our lay  
With a stout "Hip-hip-hurray"  
For the bonnie Black Ball Line !

\* \* \* \* \*

Fashionable and commercial Liverpool prides itself upon its Bold Street and Lord Street, with their shops which, local patriotism declares, challenge comparison with London's ; upon its Art Gallery and its St. George's Hall, upon James Street

and its huge shipping offices, and its great new docks, Gladstone and Canada Graving Dock, with their wonderful up-to-date machinery.

But it is in Paradise Street that you must seek for the key to Liverpool's modern greatness. It is in the old sailing-ship docks, the Salthouse, King's, and Queen's, Albert, Canning, Wapping, and the rest—that you will find the ghosts of her past. It is there, in those quiet old dock basins with their ranges of low, old buildings, and their bollards which have been worn like old stone altars by the frettings of the mooring-ropes of so many pilgrim ships, that all these old Liverpool memories seem to gather and hover, like the sea-gulls that for ever hover and pipe about the dock sheds and the shipping.

Paradise Street is an ordinary, unbeautiful thoroughfare nowadays, even though, like Ratcliff Highway, it has left its wild and rumbustious past behind. It has no architectural beauties unless it be its Sailors' Home ; and anything it may ever have possessed in the way of a disreputable quaintness seems to have passed away with its unregenerate days.

But it has had in its day and its way a fame as wide as any street in the world. Its name has been heard on all the winds that blow. It has broken the stately silence of the dawn on still, tropic seas. It has mingled with the strong thrumming of the Trades in sail and shroud, and, snatched from the lips of weary, striving, breathless yet still undaunted men, it has added for a moment its puny note to the roar of the stormy Westerlies. It has rung across the loneliest anchorages, the

remotest harbours ; mat-thatched Malayan villages have heard it, and still, palm-ringed lagoons, and the huddled flat roofs of " rose-red cities half as old as Time."

It is a rough, wild, haunting old melody, that of the " hoisting " or " halyard " shanty of " Blow the Man Down," which ought to be the civic anthem of Liverpool. Unlike most shanties, it has several versions, all of which are more or less accepted. One of them does not refer to Paradise Street at all ; in fact, it is an adaptation of a totally different shanty to the popular tune. Another, which shall be quoted in another place, is a Black Ball shanty, and is probably the original version. A third, which is here given in full, is that given both by Mr. John Masefield and the late Mr. J. E. Patterson, in their collections of shanties. It has more literary merit than the older one, and it certainly admirably conveys the Paradise Street idea :

As I was a-walking down Paradise Street—  
Aye-aye—blow the man down !—  
A pretty young gal there I chanced for to meet—  
Give me some time to blow the man down.

This pretty young gal then she said this to me :  
" There's a spanking full-rigger just ready for sea."

That spanking full-rigger to Melbourne was bound,  
She was very well-rigged and very well-found.

But as soon as the packet was clear of the Bar,  
The mate knocked me down with the end of a spar.

And as soon as the packet was out on the sea  
I'd cruel bad treatment of every degree.

So I give you this warning, afore we belay,  
Don't ever take heed of what spanking gals say—  
Give us some time to blow the man down !

A coarse, crude old rhyme enough ; but how it seems to bring the whole scene back to life ! . . .

A sailor comes rolling down Paradise Street, hands in pockets, head on chest, the very picture of "spent-up" depression. He is not very drunk, but neither is he quite sober. He has had little to eat, and an old shipmate has just stood him a drink or two, which have gone to his head. Alluring smells are wafted to him from the doors of the public-houses—the "Dewdrop," the "Steer Inn," and the rest—but their charms are not for a poor devil like him whose pay-roll has long been a thing of the past. Only this morning his boarding-house boss, once so cordial, has looked coldly upon him, and roughly ordered him to make room for a newcomer. It is a case of, in the words of the old sea song—

In comes old Grouse with a frown,  
Saying "Get up, Jack, let John sit down."

John, of course, being the newly-arrived Sou' Spainer with a year's pay to burn, and Jack the poor prodigal whose money is spent.

Even the "spanking gal" who clings to his arm—a typical Paradise Street charmer—is beginning to waver in her devotion. The "Lightning" is due in port during the next week or two with an old flame of hers on board, and she thinks it is high time Jack "got a move on."

She has been devoted to him for nearly two months—a long time according to her lights . . . and a whole fortnight since his money was done. If it wasn't for the money, she'd stick to Jack, so



she would . . . but there, a poor girl's got to live. . . .

High above the dock sheds rise the slender masts of a clipper ship—the “Donald Mackay,” “Red Jacket,” or perhaps the mighty “James Baines” herself. Jack stands swaying back on his heels a little unsteadily, and gazes up—up at the fine tracery of her rigging.

“Ain’t she a fine ship?” says Poll artlessly. “A friend o’ mine, she goes with a chap as sails in ’er . . . ’e says they get the best grub ’e ever struck.”

“’Ow’d it be if I was to sign on in ’er, Poll?” says Jack suddenly. “Glad to get rid o’ me, wouldn’t yer?”

Polly sheds a few easy tears.

“I don’t know ’ow hever I’ll get on when you’re gone, Jack,” she snivels, and her ample bosom heaves readily.

But Jack only smiles a queer, wry smile. He knows—none better—how much her affection and her tears are really worth. He is sick of the land and its ways—its false friends, its loose women, its pleasures that leave nothing but empty pockets and an aching head.

It is the way of the world. It is just as well Polly is faithless. If it were otherwise, she would very likely break her heart for him.

And deep down in his muddled mind he knows that stately ship as the symbol of his first love, a love more cruel in her way than this poor Blowsabella of Paradise Street, a love whose gifts are hardship, and cold, and peril in great waters—yet to whom, while breath is in his body, he will continually return.

“ Oh, Lord love ye, Polly ! ” he says. “ Ye’ll soon get another fancy man ! ”

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I searched Liverpool through for sailing craft one day not long ago, and none did I find but a few topsail schooners loading salt and Sunlight Soap for little Welsh and West country harbours, and one ugly tub of a four-masted schooner, as leaky as a sieve, and by the looks of her a war product of the U.S. Shipping Board or I am greatly mistaken. Surely no nation ever put so many hideous nightmares in the form of ships on the water as the United States during the War period. The one great point in their favour is that they will soon be gone. Sail and steam alike, they were so very “ War ” in their construction that not many of them will survive a few years’ service.

Coburg Dock, Brunswick Dock, Canning Dock, I passed by them all, and nowhere did I see, lifting stately masts and spars in splendid aloofness over the squat dock buildings and the masts and funnels of the steamers, even one survivor of all the “ spanking full-riggers ” which once brought their wonder and beauty to the flat Mersey shore. No tall Cape Horner at the grain berths in Waterloo Dock—no barques from the Baltic—no nitrate ships from Taltal or Iloilo or Coquimbo.

Salthouse Dock was empty but for one solitary tramp steamer, and even she seemed to have gone to sleep. It was alone with its memories ; memories of fair ships and skilled captains, of stalwart mates and hard, rough, fearless crews, in the great days of sail. Memories of a life which will soon be as remote

and as uncomprehended as that of another planet. Memories of lordly Colonies clippers, swift packet ships, 'Frisco grain fleet—all vanished like summer clouds below the horizon of the bygone years. Like summer clouds, white and fair; and, alas! wellnigh as transient in their strength and beauty. In this lies the especial pathos of the passing of the sailing ship. Like the tropic plant which grows for a hundred years, blooms once and dies, the sailing ship had hardly reached the height of her development before her knell was sounded. . . .

Out in the river a big four-master, 'Frisco bound, is just getting under way. The wind is fair, and already she is hoisting her topsails ready to drop the tug's hawser as soon as she is clear of the anchorage. The mate, a big raw-boned "blue-nose," with hands like hammers, and a mouth like a slit across his lean face, is storming about the deck trying to rouse the half-drunk, half-dead crew to some semblance of willing liveliness.

"Na-ow then—are ye sailors, or ca-arpses, or what are ye? A-in't there a shantyman among the whole blamed crowd o'ye?"

And, the crew remaining unresponsive, he bursts forth himself in a voice which is strong, rather than melodious—accompanying the strains with a sort of obligato of comments and exhortations, more pointed than polite:

"As I was a-walking down Paradise Street—  
(Give it lip, ye Mahound sojers!)" And in a wavering, half-hearted fashion two or three of the crowd take up the chorus—

Aye-aye—blow the man down.

"A big fat policeman I chanced for to meet—

(Sing up there, d—— ye ! . . . you, ugly, sing up—air ye deaf or dumb or what are ye ? ") The second line of the chorus comes a shade more vigorously :

Give us some time to blow the man down !

And gradually the shanty takes hold as verse after verse recounts how the policeman accuses the sailor :

You sail in a packet that flies the Black Ball—  
You've robbed a poor Dutchman of clothes, boots and all ;

and how the unlucky culprit finishes up by " getting six months in Liverpool town for kicking a p'liceman and blowing him down." Great is the power of the shanty over the sailorman ! At last the chorus comes roaring out with a will, ringing out across the river, a full-throated volume of sound. . . .

A dream—a dream like the rest ! Long since she took her last departure from the shores of Time and made her landfall on the coasts of Eternity. But still the echo of the shantyman's strain seems to linger on the breeze that is flecking the turbid Mersey channel with white horses, and the wind seems to bring again the ghost of an old sea song :

Bound away—bound away—where the wild waters flow—  
She's a Liverpool packet—oh, Lord, let her go !



## CHAPTER II

Falmouth is a Fine Town—A Graveyard of Ships—The Quay-Punt

**I** NEVER come to Falmouth but I have that strange feeling of coming home.

The first time I was there I came to it from the sea. It was on a Sunday evening, and the streets were full of returning churchgoers ; and by the time I had walked the length of Market Strand and back it was dark. I had never been within a couple of hundred miles of the place before ; yet, somehow I never thought of asking the way. I believe I could have found it blindfold. Everything seemed familiar—the very smell of the Madonna lilies in the barrack garden and the great geranium that covered the whole building. When next I went (alas !) lilies and geraniums were alike gone. A gale of wind had torn down the one, soldiers in huts in the barrack garden had wiped out the others.

I am not, as I have said elsewhere, what I believe is called “psychic.” But if it be true that men’s souls are not here once only (and how else account for that strange sense of familiarity with which one visits some places and sees some faces for the first time ?)—if it be true that the vagrant soul of man sojourns more than once on earth, then some time, I know, mine dwelt aforetime in Falmouth town. And I like to think so, for Falmouth is a fine town

with ships upon the bay, even though those words were not really first sung in her praise at all, but in that of the little town of Amble in Northumberland, as near the northern limit of England as Falmouth is near its farthest west.

Falmouth's distinctive " period " is the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Eighteenth century are the tall, handsome brick houses in Arwenack Street that are now the sailors' hospital ; eighteenth century, too, the little old bow-windowed shops in Market Strand standing cheek by jowl with the plateglass fronts of more enterprising emporiums ; eighteenth century the old inns that have given a Cornish welcome to the passengers of the mail packets in years gone by ; and eighteenth century, above all, some of the bravest of her memories.

The glory of Falmouth was the Post Office Packet service, which was founded about the close of the seventeenth century, and continued until 1850, when changing conditions and the introduction of steam brought about the transfer of the service to Southampton, where, as the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company, it still continues, the only steamship company, by the way, with a Royal Charter.

The original mail packets were local ships chartered for the purpose ; later, as the service grew in importance, and the risks of war began to demand special qualities on the part of ships, officers and crews, brigs began to be built expressly for the service (a good many were, in fact, built at Mylor Creek) and armed with brass nine-pounders, post-office guns, as they were popularly called. There is an excellent bas-relief of the mail packet " Duke of Marlborough " to be seen on the front of the

handsome Georgian house of the name of "Marlborough," formerly the home of Captain Bull, commodore of the packet fleet in his day, who commanded several of the packets at one time and another, and engaged in several fights with privateers with varying success. Captain Bull planted those magnificent avenues of elms round about Marlborough. Like Cuddy Collingwood with his pockets full of acorns, he planted for posterity. Elm was nearly as important in shipbuilding as oak. But the packets are gone—gone and all but forgotten—and the elms still lift their stately heads above the homes of a posterity which needs them not.

The story of the Falmouth packets contains the record of many a gallant fight. There is the story of the "Antelope's" great fight with the French privateer "Atalanta," when, the "Antelope's" master and mate being both killed, the boatswain, "an illiterate fellow," one Pascoe, lashed the two ships together lest his prize might drift from him, and led his boarding party to victory. Then there is the tale of Captain Cock's engagement with the American privateers, "Tom" and "Bona," in which, although defeated, the honours of war rested with the loser, for both "Tom" and "Bona"—bigger and better armed ships—were in nearly as bad a plight after the fight as the little "Townshend." The American commander himself bore witness to his enemy's pluck in the following manner :—

I do certify that Captain J. Cock, of the Packet brig "Townshend," captured this day, did defend his ship with courage and seamanship, and that he did not strike his Colours until his vessel was perfectly unmanageable and in the act of sinking.—*November 11th, 1812.*

More than one of these engagements took place within sight of Falmouth harbour, watched, no doubt, from the very same spot by Saint Mawes Castle whence, in time of war, I looked out one day on a certain liveliness round about the Manacles, drifters bustling about like terriers about a rat-hole ; and learned the next day that yet another undersea pirate had gone to his account.

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Mr. Joseph Conrad in " Youth " remarks, a trifle tartly, that the good people of Falmouth make their living out of the misfortunes of others. And so perhaps, in a way, they do, or rather did—much in the same way as the people of the Falkland Islands.

But that can hardly be considered cause for reproach. Wrecking has long been a thing of the dark past ; and indeed one sometimes wonders if it ever was so frequently practised as some people would have us believe. After all, the Channel gales and fogs must have brought a goodly harvest to the Cornish reefs and headlands without any extraneous assistance on the part of the natives, and if, as they no doubt did, they made a practice of laying lawless hands on Crown property in the form of flotsam, jetsam, and lagend, I don't know that one can blame them overmuch. Falmouth used to have a curious by-product of maritime disaster, that of photographs of wrecks. Before the War, the Falmouth shops displayed a wonderful collection of photographs of local shipwrecks—rather a depressing gallery, it is true—but remarkably interesting.

Among them, there was the British wool-clipper



"Cromdale," which ran ashore in a fog, and the beautiful sky-sail clipper, "Queen Margaret"—a terrible picture this, showing the splendid ship all helpless and battered by the seas—and a big German, the "Pindos," swept bare as a bone, her hull lying clean over in a horrible helplessness. These classically named Germans got the worst of it more than once among the Cornish reefs and breakers, for it was just before the War that the "Hera" drove on to the Dodman and several of her crew were drowned.

There is a strange little sequel to this story. One of the rescued Germans stayed for some considerable time in the village and made quite a number of friends there—departing with mutual wishes for a future meeting. The wish was destined to find an unexpected fulfilment.

The two men who saved the German's life were called up for naval service when the War broke out. One sailed in the ill-fated "Good Hope," and went down with her at Coronel. The other in the Falkland Islands battle saw the survivors from the "Scharnhorst" brought on board; and the first German who came up the side was the man whom he had last seen in the little village street at Portscatho. So they did meet again after all, those two, atoms drifted together out of the vast chaos of war.

They are certainly rather harrowing, these shipwreck pictures, but they are so interesting historically that I was sorry to find them, last time I was in Falmouth, all but unobtainable. Why, I cannot say. Whether the Government, having allowed charts of the coast to be sold freely up to the third

year of the War, and let a German ship-chandler's wife continue to live on the Custom House Pier long after her husband had been arrested and interned, had suddenly taken it into their heads that the photographs might give information to the enemy—or whether the local publicity department had “kiboshed” them on the ground that a reputation for shipwrecks would be what the Western booster would term a “knock” for the district, I know not. Anyway, they were gone, and grisly though they were, I wish I had got a complete collection of them.

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If it were possible to trace to their origins all those bewildering diversities of fore-and-aft rig which make the English Channel so fascinating a field of observation for lovers of sailing craft, the result would be an interesting demonstration of the way in which a broad general type is modified to suit local requirements. The same thing, of course, holds good in regard to most branches of agricultural and industrial activity—carts, implements, houses, and what not—but it is perhaps nowhere to be seen quite so clearly as in local types of boats and rigging.

The yawl, the ketch, the lugger, the dandy, the cutter, the schooner, the “mumblebee,” the barge, the bawley, these and all the other varieties, leaving out of account the larger coasting craft such as topsail and two-topsail schooners, jackass barques and their kindred, all represent adaptations from one original type, brought about by some peculiarity of harbour or river, some special demand of local

trade or its conditions. Sometimes, it is true, there is a distinction without a difference ; but as a rule the reason for each divergence is to be sought for in the gradual developments of our coastwise history.

The quay-punt (the Falmouth boat *par excellence*) is, perhaps, as complete an example of this as could be cited, since its peculiar qualities came into being during two of the most romantic and stirring periods of our sea story. The palmy days of the quay-punt were those, firstly of the mail packets and then of the great times of sail, and it is from requirements consequent upon those days that their present model draws its origin. Those requirements are passing away, or have already passed ; yet the quay-punt remains and is likely to do so. Local usage in such matters as boat-building and rigging dies very hard, for there are probably few people so essentially conservative as seafaring communities.

The quay-punt may be roughly described, for the benefit of those who have never made its acquaintance, as a yawl-rigged boat with a square punt-like stern, this latter giving it the name it bears. The only difference in rig between the quay-punt and the yawl is that the former carries no gaff-topsail, the peculiarity lying in the hull, not the rig, which is not specially distinctive.

To find the why and wherefore of the quay-punt one need only glance at the two most important pages of Falmouth history to realize them at once. The great industry of the town, during practically the whole of the nineteenth century, may be summed up in the phrase still current in

local speech—"tendin' on the ships." During the Napoleonic Wars, in addition to the mail packets, transports, ships of war, and all the big volume of channel trade, crowded harbour and roads and provided the people of the town with a livelihood and an occupation.

With the decline of the packet service, came in the roaring times of sail in the 'sixties, 'seventies, and 'eighties, the years when the glory of the sailing ship reached its zenith and bade fair for a time to resist the rivalry of steam. It was then a rare thing not to find a goodly number of fine vessels, such as London, Greenock, and the Clyde were turning out from their famous yards, anchored in the calm waters of the Carrick Roads, beneath the green slopes of Trefusis Point which have gladdened the sea-weary eyes of so many home-returning sailormen. Even in more recent years it has been nothing remarkable to see fifteen or twenty big deepwatermen for "Falmouth for orders" with grain from 'Frisco, wool from Australia or nitrates from the American West Coast ports, or perhaps driven in by a Channel gale for shelter in the ample anchorage the roads have to offer.

And in all this bustle and prosperity the quays had, of course, their share. Bumboatmen, shipping agents' men, tailors' runners, all kinds of 'longshore tradesmen both good and bad, were continually at their coming and going between ship and land. Not that their activities were by any means confined to harbour work. "First come, first served," is emphatically the case where a homeward-bound crew with money to spend is concerned, and the more enterprising of the

Falmouth folk would be alongside an incoming homeward-bounder as soon as the pilot. Mr. Frank T. Bullen has a very good word to say for the Falmouth bumboat fraternity, accounting the sailorman lucky who lays out his money in the West Countrie, before the sharks of Sailor Town get hold of him and his hard-earned pocketful of coins.

But the glory is departed. The sailing vessels which anchor in Carrick Roads are few and far between by contrast with the stately fleet which once used to throng there with slender masts and tawny yards, and make the slopes of Roseland echo with the shantying of the crews. Falmouth boatmen depend nowadays on other things; on pleasure and passenger traffic, a bit of small coasting trade, a bit of fishing, a bit of this and that. The good old days survive in a few 'longshore yarns, and in the quay-punt herself.

A good sea-boat (though there are some people who think her bluff stern makes her a trifle unhandy), roomy, safe, and sensible, in short, the very best boat ever devised for her own peculiar and original calling—"tendin' on ships."

### CHAPTER III

A Danish Harbour—Southampton Past and Present—  
“Sails”—Buckler’s Hard—Lymington—On the Saltings

**I**F the connexion of Liverpool be with the Western Ocean, equally so is that of Southampton with France. It has not always been a happy marriage, so to speak ; for in the early days the men of Crécy and Agincourt marched through the West Gate to take ship for the wars, and in the fourteenth century French, Spaniards, and Genoese sailed up the Solent to plunder and slaughter all up the narrow Southampton streets. But that is long ago now, and the memory of the past altogether buried beneath that of the five long years during which Britons marched steadily through Southampton on their way to battles redder and fiercer than any field of Agincourt.

Many invaders have sailed up the Solent in the centuries gone by. Not for nothing was Southampton a walled town in the days that are gone. The first sea fight in English history was fought in Hamble River, when King Alfred put the dreaded Vikings to rout, and hanged his prisoners from the walls of his Palace of Wolvesey by way of encouragement to any of their countrymen who might take a fancy to sail their longships up the Itchen.

Speaking of the Danes in Hampshire, there is a

curious series of mounds and hollows by the side of the River Test, some twenty miles from its mouth, which has been pronounced by some experts to have been a Danish war harbour.

I know it is always a dangerous thing to differ from authorities, and generally speaking I like to give them the benefit of the doubt, and agree with anything in the nature of a romantic tradition. But I must own to having experienced several uncomfortable pangs of doubt about that Danish harbour. Remembering how almost obliterated are all traces of so important and so comparatively recent a shipbuilding centre as Buckler's Hard, it is unlikely that anything constructed so many centuries ago should be so easily traceable to-day. Besides which, I fail to see why the Danes should have made so permanent an earthwork at this particular spot. So far as I can make out, their visits to the Hampshire rivers were more in the nature of raiding incursions than of permanent lodgments, and to construct such engineering works as these must have taken in the time of the Danes at least several years and employed some hundreds of people.

On the other hand, it is likely enough that, especially before any good roads had been made in the district, the Test may have been more or less navigable as far as the so-called "Danish Harbour," in which case, what more probable than that horse-drawn barges may have been used on the river? Later, again, there was the canal over whose bed the Andover-Southampton railway—known, goodness knows why, as the Sprat and Winkle Line—now runs; and I should be rather inclined to think

that the Danish harbour may have been neither more nor less than a lay-by for canal boats, possibly a barge builder's yard as well.

But there is, fortunately, no question whatever about the Danish longship which was dug out of the mud of Hamble River, nor of Alfred's battle there. You may see a fragment of the ship to-day in the Southampton Museum.

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I don't know what particular tavern the author of "The Faithful Heart" had in his mind. The old "Dolphin" in the High Street is the very ideal of a seaport inn, with its hospitable bow-windows and wide arched entrance giving glimpses of a charming yard all gay window-boxes and quaint angles. The church of Holy Rood, too, has interesting associations with the Dibdin family, though the church, all but the spire, is not old. I believe "to want the vane off the church steeple" is a figure of speech for desiring the unattainable. But I never see the fascinating ship-vane on the spire of Holy Rood without greatly desiring to commit the sacrilege of ascending to the top of the steeple and carrying it off.

But on the whole I should not call the town of Southampton a very salty place. "One foot on sea and one on shore," its regard seems rather to the shore than the sea, and you would hardly know that you were in a seaport town until you get into the old streets that lead down to the Town Quay.

As a seaport, during the nineteenth century, Southampton may be said to have missed its oppor-



tunity, though it is doing its best now to make up for it by providing accommodation for the largest liners afloat, and by that astonishing tin-town, known as Atlantic Park, intended as a kind of dumping ground for European emigrants awaiting embarkation for the United States. There is no port, not even Liverpool, where you see so many "mammoth liners"—to use the reporter's pet phrase—at one and the same time as at Southampton. There is, indeed, so much vastness as to be oppressive, and even the sight of the enormous week's wash being carried away by hordes of stewards does not improve matters. You can see more washing on the Docks at Southampton, and more globe-trotters, than anywhere else in the world, perhaps.

But even so recently as just before the War the Atlantic invasion had only just begun, and Southampton was still the special preserve of the Royal Mail Steam Packet, the P. and O. and the Union Castle boats. Among the outward and visible signs of the tropical connexions of the port was the rash of parrots which used to come out on the Southampton doorsteps of a sunny afternoon. I don't see so many parrots since the War. Perhaps parrot food was unobtainable: or possibly the patriotic citizens of Southampton served them up for dinner like Ser Federigo's Falcon.

Captain Crutchley in his book of nautical reminiscence, "My Life at Sea," gives a pleasant picture of Southampton in the early 'seventies—"a nice quiet little place with just enough of the best sort of shipping to make it of considerable importance." At that time the P. and O. boats lay in the outer

basin, and "always presented a beautiful appearance; . . . with rigging and sails in perfect order they were all that the eye of a sailor could desire," . . . their old-fashioned bowsprits extending right out over the quays. Queen's Terrace and the Canute Hotel were the principal resorts of officers of the ships in port. Queen's Hotel is still to be seen, an old-world crescent with rows of pleasant bow-windowed houses. But the Canute Hotel has had to yield pride of place to the great new pile of the South Western, with its time-ball on its highest pinnacle dominating town and harbour.

I always fancy that the R.M.S.P. and Union boats look upon the big Atlantic ferry steamers as interlopers, and grumble together in their quarter of the docks about the invasion of the port by these profiteers, much like disgruntled old gentlemen lamenting the decay of their pet particular club.

I saw Shackleton's "Quest" when she was fitting out in Southampton. There seemed to be a shadow of ill-luck on her from the start. A carpenters' strike was the trouble at the time I saw her, and I remember—though it is easy to remember such things after the event—the faint sense of depression I carried away from her. She had been chosen by men who know all there is to know about the work she had to do; but she gave me an impression of her inadequacy which almost amounted to a sense of impending disaster. The tragedy was to come sooner than anyone dreamed of, and in a different fashion.

When you get tired of counting bundles of washing it is a relief to go along the docks and count boxes of tomatoes or baskets of strawberries, or whatever

may happen to be the seasonable fruit for the time being. You would hardly think there were so many tomatoes in the world ; certainly you would not think they could be grown within the limits of the Channel Islands. Another Southampton import is onions. The French boats bring them—long brown strings of them—from Normandy and Brittany, and brown-faced women and boys sell them from door to door. Otherwise fruit and frozen meat are about the only imports Southampton has, except oddments in the way of lumber and seacoal for the little wharves along the Itchen.

Looking out from the little windows of the Tudor House museum—where there are to be seen some interesting pictures of old Southampton, and one of the finest bone ship models I ever saw anywhere—looking out from there over the high-pitched tiled roofs and leaning gables of the houses in Blue Anchor Lane and the old walls with trees and red valerian growing in their crannies, it is not impossible to recall visions of the past—plundering Dane, dreaming Crusader, men of Crécy and Agincourt, invading French and Genoese, and the little band that left the old Town Quay in the “ Mayflower ” for freedom’s sake. A green land, a fair land, a land greatly to be desired, greatly to be loved, greatly to die for . . . a land hallowed for ever by many everlasting farewells. . . . But hark ! there goes the blaring note of a liner making ready to sail, scattering the unsubstantial ships of dream like morning mists on the Solent.

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Through the open door of the sail-loft a light

breeze blows in, and with it a faint odour of salt and pitch and tidal flats at low water.

Most of the heads busily bent over the work are grey or bald, for sail-makers are more readily met with nowadays among the elders than among the young. The decline of the great sailing-ship era set a good many experienced sailormen looking for a job ashore, such as are still to be found in places which cater for the yachtsman's needs as well as for the lesser uses to which—even on board steamships—canvas is still put.

Old "Sails" sits stitching away industriously at a "dodger" for an Atlantic liner's bridge. His well-worn "palm" is polished with age and use, and the bench upon which he sits, with its row of holes for his marline-spikes, bradawls, and similar implements, is worn into smooth irregularities like an old church pew. His leather apron is slit in a thousand places; how it manages to stick together at all only "Sails" himself knows.

It is more than fifty years since first "Sails" went to sea, and a very different thing his trade was then from this (finicking, it must sometimes seem to him) business of dodgers and windsails and such-like mere side-issues at the best, which is nearly all that is left of it, but for an occasional mainsail for a racing cutter.

Where are they now, the big courses, the snowy royals, the jibs—outer jib, inner jib, jib-o-jib—beneath whose strain, so the old song runs, "the mighty boom bent like a wooden hoop"—to say nothing of the Jamie Green, the watersails, stunsails, ringtail, savealls, all the rest of the flying kites whose very uses and names are all but forgotten?

Gone, all gone, like the ships that carried them ; and here sits old " Sails," with his spectacles on his nose, and his nutcracker jaws whose teeth long since went to glory on hard-tack and harness beef—just the same steady, reliable old sea-craftsman as he was when he sat on deck in the flying-fish weather, patching at an old fine-weather suit for the Tropics, or stitching away at the boltropes which were to stand the strain of the stormy " Westerlies " in a big blow off the pitch of the Horn.

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Of all those beautiful creeks, rivers, and inlets, beloved of the yachtsman in search of winter quarters, which run inland from the Solent into green England, there is perhaps none more beautiful than the Exe, or, as it is usually called, the Beaulieu River (pronounced Bewley, please, *pace* Lord Macaulay in his " Armada," who makes " the rangers of Beaulieu " rhyme with flew).

It runs up from a rather difficult entrance for a stranger to those waters, where, as many a nautical amateur has learnt from sad experience, it is one of the easiest things in the world to get stuck in the mud until the tide thinks fit to lift you off again. Thence it winds in broad silvery reaches when the tide is high, past expanses of shining mud at low water, through the heart of the New Forest, with great clumps of oaks and beeches, broken here and there by the darker hues of pine, yew—" Hampshire weed "—and holly, growing down to the very edge of the salt water.

Some few miles inland, in one of the river's widest reaches, a little pier—a new one, dating only from

King Edward the Seventh's reign—runs out into the water, visited during the summer season by excursion steamers from Southampton and South-sea. Beyond is a stretch of short-cropped grass, and beyond that again a little cluster of roofs and chimneys, which even at a casual glance have a look curiously distinct from the customary huddle of thatch and tiles and church spire which makes up the characteristic Hampshire village. At the water's edge some green mounds and a few decaying timbers suggest the previous existence of some now-vanished structure.

A place of peace and quiet—a quiet unbroken but for the song of the birds, the sigh and rustle of the forest trees, the little woodland stirrings of bird and beast and insect, the hum of midges dancing over the quiet pools, the gentle sob and gurgle of the river among its swaying water-weed.

Nothing is here to suggest the busy world of men, except for the occasional passing bustle of the comings and goings of excursionists. Even the ubiquitous char-à-banc is never seen here, though you may find it in its hundreds not many miles away, clustering about the relics of the ancient abbey of Beaulieu.

But here is in its way as much a monument of the vanished past as the famous ruin itself. For this is none other than the once far-famed Buckler's Hard, cradle of some of the most noted of the "wooden walls" of Nelson's day. Here was built the celebrated "Agamemnon," "Nelson's darling," whose fame is linked with his and that of St. Vincent for all time; and a succession of ships of the line, frigates and smaller craft, until the yard finally

closed down in the 'twenties of last century. Those mouldering timbers are the relics of the old slipways on which the mighty fabrics rose slowly up from garboard-strake to gunwale ; and there beyond are the very houses in which the workers at the Hard dwelt when it was at the height of its activity—old Georgian houses which seem to belong more to old Deptford or Poplar than to the heart of rural Hampshire.

The hamlet consists of two rows of these old houses, facing each other across a stretch of village green. The house nearest to the water on the left-hand side as you face the river is one of rather more pretensions than the rest, with its pedimented door, wide windows, and a glimpse through a long passage of a pleasant garden at the back. One fancies it the residence of some foreman or master shipwright ; the others, dwellings of the various workmen, skilled craftsmen for the most part, like the majority of shipyard workers in those days.

Early in the eighteenth century the then Montagu of Beaulieu evolved a scheme for establishing a great port at Buckler's Hard for trade with the West Indies, of which he had been for some years governor. This plan, however, fell through, or rather it never actually materialized ; and about the middle of the century the famous shipyard was founded there.

Who was Buckler ? In all probability no one knows. All but his name is forgotten, like those unknown pioneers whose names still linger about lonely lakes in the Rockies.

There are not a great number of houses for so important a centre ; but it must be remembered

that in all probability only the hulls of the ships would be built at Buckler's Hard, where the supply of timber was near at hand, to be rigged and fitted out at Portsmouth.

A busy scene enough it must have been in the days gone by, and one which it is not difficult even now to conjure up before the eye of fancy. Down yonder on the slipways are the massive ribs of some trim frigate or proud seventy-four, and a busy hum of activity fills the air, punctuated by the monotonous drub-drub of the caulkers' mallets and the tap of the shipwrights' hammers. Out on the quiet water lies the hull of a ship which may quite conceivably have fought in Blake's fleet—the sheer hulk alongside which the new ship will lie when she is ready for her masts to be hoisted into position. Everywhere is the pleasant shipyard smell of tar, and pitch, and shavings, and sawdust—the sort of smell which (banished from the modern shipyard) still lingers in little boat-builders' sheds in quiet, decaying ports and fishing towns, where the old methods and materials still to some extent prevail.

But now, all is silent. Everything is changed but the river, and the forest of lordly oaks that were saplings when ships were a-building at Buckler's Hard. Somewhere out in the Solent comes a long wail from the siren of a liner making for Southampton. There are the great new ships, the modern harbour and its manifold bustle. But here is only peace—peace and quiet, and the great memories of the past.

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Lymington might stand as the type of many a



dozen little decayed and decaying English ports which once enjoyed a bustling trade in a small way, and raised up generations of good sailormen to supply the needs of our Navy and our merchant ships. In her day she must have been almost as important a place as Southampton; but chance passed on up the Solent and left her peacefully dreaming by her winding muddy river and breezy salt marshes. But even so she had her comfortable complement of coasting trade: topsail schooners and London barges and what not, coming and going, enough to keep her two or three local pilots busy and prosperous, and fill the "Alarm," and the "Solent," and the "Quay" inns with talk and singing in the evenings.

But these have passed away now: they passed when the Great War came, and they have never returned. They passed away, of course, in part, with the salt industry, which at one time had forty salt-pans at work and paid £50,000 annually in taxes. Then they went altogether when the War came. All that comes now is an occasional barge with a load of bricks or coal or gravel. And there are a few blue-jerseyed loungers on the tiny quay, most of whom have sailed in yachts a year or two, and come home to settle down to a kind of amphibious existence.

Yachting furnishes both the chief industry and the chief excitement of the place nowadays. The quaint little "Alarm" inn is called after the celebrated yacht of that name; she is believed to have been the biggest cutter ever built, her lines and her name having been taken from a smuggler captured off the Isle of Wight.

They have a wild, weird charm of their own, these desolate "saltings," where you can walk for miles along the dikes between the tide-left mud when the water is low and sheets of lapping water when the sea is in. Out towards the Solent, Jack-in-the-Basket, the Cocked Hat, and the rest of the guiding marks which show the winding course of the channel, stand out in the sunset like gibbeted pirates. It is plain enough to see that Lymington "needs no bulwarks, no towers along the steep." So far as attack from the sea was concerned she had no need to do anything but dismantle Jack-in-the-Basket and his companions, and sleep soundly o' nights without the slightest fear of the French or anyone else.

Across the levels comes strangely the sound of a high shrill voice singing that "she must be some wonderful girl." An enterprising town council has engaged a troupe of entertainers, and they are going through a programme on the draughty little bandstand for the edification of a few children with prams, and the long orange-coloured sunset, flaming on the river reaches and flushing the seaward face of the Wight, and the thin wind that comes coldly over the saltings at evening. It is growing dark, and Jack-in-the-Basket is settling to his lonely vigil; and the lights are flashing out one by one in the tall old Georgian houses and low-ceiled water-side inns of the little ancient seaport that sent eight ships to fight the Armada.

## CHAPTER IV

Pacific Coast—The Ship "Antiope"—The Killer Ship—  
Rolling Stones—Lumber—Ships' Names—Sealers and Whalers  
—Conclusion

**Y**OU can sit on the edge of the Outer Wharf at Victoria, and fish for black bass with a bit of white cotton rag, and watch the great ships come in from the sea with the wonder of the East in their holds.

Over across the Strait of Juan de Fuca the summits of the ranges on the American mainland are flushed with faint rose, for it is only at sunset that the black bass will bite. There is a smell of forest fires in the air, and a glow on the flanks of the remote mountains, and a light wisp of cloud that means miles of ravaged woodland and an inferno of smoke and flame in which men are fighting, parched and blackened like demons. The light on Brothie Ledge has just begun to wink leisurely, and far out on Race Rocks the lighthouse answers it with his occulting beam.

The sun has gone down into the China Seas in a great fiery golden pomp, like the sea-burial of an old Norse king, and a splendid afterglow, slow and solemn as a funeral march, goes flooding up to the zenith like the glow of a funeral pyre; and on the edge of it hangs a lonely star. A small moon drifts like a feather dropped from an archangel's wing.

A riding-light has begun to glimmer in the rigging of the anchored windjammer in the Royal Roads.

It was on one of these magical evenings that I knew even a Blue Funnel freighter—surely one of the greatest achievements in the way of absolute ugliness that man in the guise of a “naval architect” ever perpetrated—it was on such an evening that I have known even one of these slab-sided atrocities assume for a transient hour a haunting and fantastic glamour.

She came in slowly, steaming out of that rose glory of sea and sky ; a black, squat monster, with her double derricks standing up like gibbets against the afterglow. Her port and starboard lights sent long green and red reflections into the faintly-rippled tide ; and the electric lights on her shelter deck made a queer cold contrast with the warm light of the evening.

She was bringing a full complement of Chinese immigrants, and they had all gathered together along the bulwarks, under the electric lights, staring out towards the new land they were nearing. There must have been some hundreds of them, all clustered there together, and as silent as death—some hundreds of yellow faces, alike with the uncanny likeness of the Mongol, their staring eyes seeming the only things alive in them ; and in that queer blending of lights they looked like a cargo of souls in some half-crazed vision of a mediaeval craftsman—some Ship of Death in an engraving by an old German artist. It was an unforgettable picture in its weird, uncanny fashion.

I always used to like those names of little one-ship companies which were (and perhaps are) still to be seen—in white lettering on a black ground—on the door-jambs of low, old-fashioned office-blocks in certain quiet and sea-smelling byways of waterside Victoria. It was not only that they represented a day before the day of great corporations, of multiple shops and multiple ships, but there was a smack of romance about their designations. One felt vaguely that a ship thus individually owned must have a more individual and adventurous career than one of several dozen owned by a limited company with plate-glass-windowed offices. The name—"The Ship 'Poltalloch,' " or whatever it might be—might stand as that of some yarn of the sea—something with treasure-seeking in it, and blackbirding, and youth, and danger, and villainy, and the sound of the sea.

The "Ship 'Poltalloch' " I saw once *in propria persona*. She was in dry dock at Esquimalt, and she had rather an interesting figurehead, I remember, of a bewigged Georgian-looking personage, who I fancy must have been copied either from some family portrait or old engraving, or else from the figurehead of some much older vessel. But of the ship "Antiope" I never saw anything but that matter-of-fact little white-lettered plate, with the picture it always called up of a shapely hull and white sails, of a swift ship running like a deer through the waves that leapt at her flanks like hounds. I never saw her, and I am sorry, for she had as strange and eventful a life story as a ship ever had.

She was built in 1866, by Reid of Glasgow, and her active sea career only ended a short time ago, though

(as will be seen) it had not been quite unbroken. She is thus older by a few years than that other splendid veteran, "Cutty Sark"; but she has known a good many more ups and downs than the famous China flyer.

She started life under the ownership of Messrs. Joseph Heap & Sons, of Liverpool, rice millers. The firm specialized in the sort of name to which the shellback invariably used to give strange pronunciations of his own: "Parthenope," "Melanope," and "Eurynome" were others of their fleet. I saw "Melanope" many a time, dragging out her old age as a coal hulk at the C.P.R. wharf at Esquimalt.

"Antiope," like her sisters, sailed on a regular round from Liverpool to Australia with passengers and general cargo, from Australia to India with anything that came her way—often it would be horses from New South Wales—and on to Rangoon to load rice for home. Then she passed to another Liverpool firm, and made some good runs in the Australian wool trade.

When the star of the clipper ship began to set, "Antiope" shared the fate of many more British sailing craft. She was "sold foreign" to the Russians, but they had not had her long before she was captured as a prize of war by the Japanese. Her captors sold her "in prize." It is curious, by the way, that the Japanese, clever sailors though they are, never seem to have gone in for big sailing vessels, either squaresail or fore-and-aft. She was now once again under the Red Duster, being owned and registered in Victoria, at which time, no doubt, her name figured on the white-lettered plate I knew.

She put in some years in the Pacific coast lumber trade—round the Horn to London or Liverpool, across the Pacific to Newcastle, N.S.W. (a run on which many a good ship has gone down with all hands), down the coast to the nitrate ports with lumber—and then changed hands once more, this time going to New Zealand for conversion into a coal hulk.

And there, you might have thought, would be an end of her, as would, no doubt, have been the case but for the Great War. When tonnage began to soar, the old "Antiope" was refitted and re-rigged and sent forth to sea again, like many another old sailer, to earn freights such as had been never dreamed of even in her days of prosperity.

She had not been at sea long, however, before she ran aground while trying to make Bluff Harbour after being partly disabled in a gale. Even after fifty years of service, it was still thought worth while to bring a salvage outfit down to try to float her ; but all efforts failed, and she would have been left for the seas to work their will upon had not an enterprising local journalist detected the leak while exploring the hold with the aid of a rope-ladder. She was patched up again and towed into Port Chalmers for repairs, and after the War was still at sea and earning good money.

Now she is once more converted into a hulk—this time a sugar hulk at Chinde—and during the recent cyclone she rode through it all at her moorings undamaged when nearly every other craft in the river was sunk.

If ships could speak they could tell some wonderful yarns. But I doubt if any could tell much

queerer ones than the ship "Antiope"—clipper ship, prize of war, timber drogher, coal hulk—at sea in time of war for a second time, shipwrecked, refloated, and now at last a hulk once again, with a cyclone by way of diversion for her old age.

Her old ribs must still be as sound as ever, and there is just a chance that she has not seen the end of her adventures even yet. . . . Who knows?

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The "Antiope" was, without doubt, a "lucky" ship. But I once came across in Victoria one of the authentic examples of an "unlucky" ship—one of those fatal ships the persistency of whose misfortunes is such that no theory of coincidence can ever satisfactorily explain them away.

She was an ugly brute of a steamer—one of the old China Mutual ships—with nothing about her to suggest mystery or superstition or anything of the kind. But she killed her man every voyage with a sinister and appalling regularity. She used to do it in all sorts of conceivable and inconceivable ways—bursting gauge-glasses in the engine-room, accidents with cargo-derricks, accidents while coal-ing, accidents to shore-boats, people falling down open hatches—any kind of mishap you could possibly think of either in harbour or at sea.

The time I saw her in Victoria she had—so far—not taken her usual toll. But she was only biding her time. She did it while she was there—did it with a wire hawser that gave way unexpectedly and knocked a fellow into the harbour. It must have been stranded somewhere, though nobody knew it was. The ship had taken her toll!



What was the reason of it—that strange doom which slunk in her wake year after year? Had someone chalked obscenities on her hull in the shipyard where she was built? I have heard the “Titanic’s” doom ascribed to the fact that Orange shipyard labourers had chalked “To Hell with the Pope” on all her plates. Was she “built in th’ eclipse and rigged with curses dark?” Did someone meet a red-haired woman on his way to work on her, and not turn back? Did she carry somewhere within her a ghastly secret like that of the “Great Eastern”? Who can say?

Another ship with rather a curious history which was a visitor to Victoria was the barquentine “Alta”—the ship without a flag, she used to be called. I forget exactly how it came about, but, briefly, during the process of changing ownership, she was for a time actually sailing under no flag at all. It was a situation with any number of interesting possibilities. Supposing, for instance, anyone had happened to be born in her on that particular voyage—he would have been a citizen of Nowhere. It has been propounded by the United States Immigration Authorities that the son of British parents born in Egypt was an Egyptian—hence, presumably, a person born nowhere would not legally be alive at all. I wonder what would be his precise position in law. If he married, would he be really married, or would his wife be considered to have been married to Nobody? If he committed a crime, would he be outside all law, being a native of Nowhere? It would be a useful position for a potential filibuster or soldier, for he could dispose

of his services to any country he fancied without being a traitor to his own.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Pacific coast is a great place for rolling stones of every sort and description. I remember meeting what I should say was the very perfection of the type. He was sitting on the edge of the Outer Wharf—it was in Victoria—on a sort of coaming that runs along the edge, very comfortable to sit on, though given to exuding tar in very hot weather. His coat—I don't think there was a shirt underneath—was fastened together with string, being innocent of buttons. His knee showed through his trousers. His boots were ruins. But he spoke with the unmistakable accents of cultivation.

I don't think he was a drunkard : he had none of the squalid signs of it. He may have been a gambler, but I doubt that either. I should rather take him for one of those born tramps, who have some strain of gipsy blood that keeps them constantly on the move, who abhor the clothes, the conventions, the cribbed and cabined life of cities, and choose for their comrades the sailor, the cowboy, the gaucho, for their habitation the tent, the herdsman's hut, the camp-fire, the foc's'sles of ships. His eyes were clear and his skin tanned ; he had none of the look of the *déclassé* for all his rags and tatters. I talked to him quite a long time about ships, of which he seemed to know a good deal. I only saw him once. He was the sort you only see once. But I have often wondered what his history was.

Then there were the old sealing captains—many of them hailed from the Shetlands : fair-haired,

blue-eyed men of the purest Norse type—and all kinds of old seafaring men, like the ship's carpenter who was building himself a boat in his front garden in the summer evenings, and was always ready for a yarn of his old sailing-ship days. One I remember was of an experience in the baths at Sydney, when he found himself sharing his dip with a good-sized shark.

Captain Barclay-Bates was a different type altogether. Captains, by the way, were decidedly frequent in those days. Anybody was a captain who had ever commanded so much as a motor boat—or even a hockey team. But Barclay-Bates was a real captain all right, taking a turn ashore. He was generally up to the ears in some wonderful new financial scheme, which never seemed to get any further than renting a palatial suite of offices, having them newly “kalsomined,” and engaging a stenographer. Not that there was anything dishonest about the man. He was simply one of the most incurable optimists that ever stepped, and a bit of a fantastic into the bargain. He was a perky little cock-sparrow of a man, with a bristling moustache and aggressive pointed beard; and—with a cheesecutter cap over one eye—he would have looked the part of Captain Kettle to perfection. I fancy really he must have been a reincarnation of a buccaneer who had sacked Panama with Henry Morgan, and buried ghost-watched chests of doubloons in islands of the Caribbees. He cropped up not long ago in some sort of a comic-opera performance, in which he held a number of Dago officials scared stiff with a revolver in one hand, while he overawed his own crew with the other. How he must have revelled in it!

Then there was the pilot with the inexhaustible supply of yarns. He was rather like a red round-about little edition of the Ancient Mariner, for he was always ready to "loll on a bollard, a sun-burned son of the sea," arrange himself in a graceful attitude with his arm hooked round a post, and spin the longest and the most amazing yarns you ever heard in your life. It was currently reported that he once told one that lasted all the way from Tacoma to Nanaimo—and that only at the rate of seven knots—and even then it wasn't finished. But they were really excellent yarns, some of them . . . and true—oh, well, you can't have everything, and the great point about them was that they might quite conceivably have been; except that one about the captain's wife who was so stout that when she was transferred from one ship to another the two vessels, which had got locked together in a storm at Valparaiso, parted company by sheer force of gravity. I never could quite swallow that one . . . but the irony of it was that his very best yarn was the one most people never believed, and in my opinion it was true from start to finish!

\*            \*            \*            \*            \*

There was nearly always a sailing vessel at the lumber mill wharf—either one of the yearly-lessening number of British square-riggers or some old "has-been" sold to Chile or Italy, or at the least one of the big raking American fore-and-afters that are such a feature of the Pacific coast harbours. How it brings it all back, when you see in your daily paper some familiar ship's name—see it, as (alas!)

one too often does see it, under the ominous heading "Reinsurance Rates" . . . and watch it, as the days go by, and the rate creeps up higher and higher, from five guineas to ten, from ten to twenty, till it gets up as high as ninety . . . and then—well, either the old barksy snaps her fingers at the underwriters by turning up somewhere, or else she drops out of the list as uninsurable, presently to be, in due course, "posted missing."

To anyone who has known a fine ship—known her only, as you might put it, as an acquaintance—such an announcement cannot but give something of a pang. Whatever comes or goes, you will not see her more. And you remember her, how tall and fine she looked, there by the lumber mill . . . and feel the sawdust under your feet, and hear the shrill note of the saws, and smell the pungent resinous smell of the new lumber . . . and remember yarns you heard on board her, and the captain's bird singing in the sunlight . . . and, last of all, you remember how you saw her towing out to Flattery in the early morning, shaking the reefs out of her topsails for the first stage of the five-thousand-mile run Home.

Ah, well ; and so she is gone ! Poor old Stirlingshire . . . gone at the last under a new name and a new flag—a sad end for a good ship !

Some fine ships, Chilean owned, used to come in from the nitrate ports. The Chilenos—the "English of the Pacific"—have bought many of our old stagers, and they generally allow them to retain their old names until the end. I saw the famous clipper "Ivanhoe" once, though not at very close quarters. There had been a light mist

in the early hours—just enough to keep the Brothie Ledge fog signal bleating—but it had cleared as the sun mounted, leaving that wonderful translucency in the air that so often follows mist. She was towing down from Nanaimo or Ladysmith, where she had been taking on a cargo of coal ; and in that bright, virginal, crystal-clear morning she looked as if seen through fine glass—like a bottled ship in a crystal flask miraculously made real. She had no sail set, and every spar and rope stood out wonderfully distinct, the clean, fine lines of her hull outlined on a sea as flat as a mirror.

Very often ships sold foreign are re-named, and you may sometimes discover some famous old flyer masquerading under some unpronounceable pseudonym or other. To the ship-lover it is one of the rare moments of triumph, such as comes to the connoisseur who finds some rare first edition in a heap of tattered rubbish on a bookstall, when, exploring the neglected decks of some old forlorn barque, he spells out on capstan head or bell, green with verdigris or pitted with rust, the letters of some name that was once one to conjure with wherever sailors met. True, unlike most collectors, you can't take your find away with you—but when your collection is a collection of memories, what matter ?

\* \* \* \* \*

The naming of ships seems nowadays to be something of a lost art among us. Take, for instance, those masterpieces of inept nomenclature, the " War " ships, which began quite reasonably with " War Spear," " War Sword," and the like, then

degenerated into such meaningless combinations as "War Beryl" and "War Peridot," and touched the nadir of unimaginative futility in the "War Fig."

War Fig! Could anything be conceived more inane, more meaningless, or more inappropriate? It suggests a dozen questions—as, why, to begin with, Fig at all? What possible connexion is there between figs and ships, except in the capacity of a cargo; and, even if Fig be conceded, then why on earth War Fig? What is a War Fig, and why is a War Fig different from a Peace Fig, or for the matter of that a pre-War Fig?

Then there are the American "standard" ships, which are in little better case: the "Lake Gravity," for example, and the "Lake Frugality," which might quite conceivably be accompanied by the "Lake Prohibition" or the "Lake Sobriety." The United States Mail Line started rather terribly with the "Panhandle State," and "Centennial State" was little better; "Lone Star State," on the other hand, makes quite a good-sounding name. But the line has now abandoned its States in favour of Presidents. When one comes to think of it, what an absurdity it is to call a ship, which is feminine, after a man, thus compelling the utterance of all sorts of ridiculous statements—as, for instance, "the 'President Garfield' has lost her propeller!"

And yet there can be a very charm in incongruity. There is a kind of magnificent insolence about a stately Oriental or classical polysyllable flaunted over the seven seas from the counter of an ugly, matter-of-fact little cargo drudge. Nor need one quarrel with those plain, sensible New England

names of men and women so often borne by American ships, and especially by American sailing ships: those "Willie T. Thises" and "Annie M. Thats" which inevitably call before the mind's eye one of those big, austere Yankee schooners, with their almost Puritanical simplicity of line and rig. They seem to belong to little one-man or family shipyards in Massachusetts or Maine; and they suggest lean, lantern-jawed skipper-owners given to religion, and hard-fisted mates, the lineal descendants of just such seamen as "Long Tom Coffin" or Melville's "Starbuck." With us, similar names are seldom found nowadays outside the coasting trade; and even there we prefer such flights of fancy as "Pride of the West" or "Cornish Belle."

True, our big liners are well enough named—our "Olympics" and "Baltics" (I wonder why the White Star Line has never used the obvious "Gaelic"), our "Aquitantias" and "Empresses" and the rest, to say nothing of the Blue Funnel Line's Homeric jaw-crackers. But there is, after all, an air of standardizing about all these names. They lack that human touch which was present in the old ship names.

How they sing themselves in the memory, those old names of ships—"Golden Hynde," "Mayflower," "Jesus of Lubeck," "Trade's Increase," "Globe," "Hector," "Good Intent," "Betsy Cains," "Cognac Packet." Names of China clippers beautiful and brave to hear as the names of beautiful and gallant things ought to be: "Thermopylæ," "Ariel," "Lothair," "Sir Lancelot"; names of big slashing Colonial clippers and Blackwall frigates:



"Star of Peace," "Jerusalem," "Thyatira," with others called after Wellington's Peninsular victories, "Vimiera," "Albuera," "Vittoria." There is a "Vimiera" afloat to-day, but she is a much newer ship than the Blackwaller of that name. The American clippers were no less high-sounding: "Romance of the Seas," "Great Republic," "Flying Cloud," "Sea Serpent," "Chariot of Fame," and "Neptune's Car" being characteristic examples; and it should be added that they were generally fitted with very elaborate full-length figureheads to match.

But there are beautiful names to be found among more modern sailing vessels, though a shade less fanciful. There are the Scottish Shires for example, "Kinross-shire," "Elginshire," "Clackmannanshire"; and the Hills, "Marlborough Hill" and the rest; the Bens, "Ben-Nevis" and "Benmore"; Counties, like the "County of Linlithgow"; and good English names like "Rowena" and "Harold."

But perhaps the best of all were those of the Sierras: "Sierra Nevada," "Sierra Morena," and so on; and those other names of mountains which were borne with such beautiful appropriateness by some fine Liverpool ships now no more: "Matterhorn," "Lyderhorn," and "Silberhorn." The likeness of one of those tall towers of whiteness to a far-seen peak of snow makes the idea both an obvious and a particularly happy one.

Needless to say, the beautiful names of the ships sometimes got rather unceremonious treatment from their unlettered crews. A case in point is that of the old clipper "Antiope," whose story is

given elsewhere in these pages. On her maiden voyage, the story goes, more than one old shellback foretold for her an early and a violent end. How could she be anything else but an unlucky ship, was their contention, when she was fitted up with a name like "Anti-hope"? What did it mean, anyway, if it didn't mean "against hope"? But that was nearly sixty years ago, and the "Anti-hope" is still afloat, so the croakers were for once wide of the mark!

\* \* \* \* \*

I daresay there are now none of those old decaying sealing schooners left which used to lie, green and rotting, in that part of Victoria's Inner Harbour known as "The Arm"—a dismal, stagnant sort of spot, dedicated to garbage, and dead cats, and snags, and sawmill refuse, and mouldering slipways, and sinister leaning boathouses that seemed waiting for murders to be committed in them.

There were still two or three there, the year before the War, poor melancholy-looking relics of what had been in their day among the most seaworthy and staunch of small seagoing craft. I believe one or two of them were taken to serve as some kind of bonfire at one of those peculiar carnivals or similar festive occasions of which the Pacific coast is so inordinately fond. But they refused either to burn or sink.

Some have been fitted out with auxiliary engines and turned into halibut schooners; and I wonder more people have not seen their possibilities as cruising yachts. One—the "Casco"—earned some considerable renown through her association with

Robert Louis Stevenson, who went cruising in her to the South Seas.

The sort of sealing connected with Victoria was not that horrid business of bloody massacre on the rookeries. The Victoria seal fishery was pelagic, that is, it was carried on among the seals in the open sea on their way northwards to their breeding grounds in the Pribyloffs. Nor was the seal hunted the same as that whose spoils adorn peeress and profiteers. It was the hair seal, not the fur seal. The method of hunting was by shooting the seals in the water; but when the threatened extinction of the seals by indiscriminate slaughter led to the appointment of a commission to frame regulations for their protection, it was ordained that no seals were to be taken unless by spearing. That sounded the death-knell of the Victoria sealing fleet. "What chance had we," said a grizzled old sealing skipper, "poking about with sticks like a lot of old women stirring mush?" It broke the heart of many a stout captain and many a gallant ship.

Whaling has always—"always," that is, in the sense of the white man's "always"—been an important industry in Victoria. There used to be plenty of whales even in the shallow waters of the Gulf of Georgia and the Strait of Juan de Fuca, and there is a settlement on one of the Gulf islands which must have been founded by whalers, called still Whaletown. There used to be a trying station at Victoria itself, but that with its sweet odours has long since been banished, and the nearest one to Victoria is now at Nootka Sound on the West Coast of the island. I never smelled a trying station, but I have smelled the little steamers which

brought the barrels of whale oil to Victoria, and that to the real thing is, I believe, "as sunlight unto moonlight and as water unto wine."

The whale which is mostly hunted in the North Pacific is the finback, and a few sulphur-bottoms and sperm whales are also taken. The finback is a variety of whalebone whale, like the Greenland or "right" whale, having the distinctive arrangement of shutters inside his mouth—the "gill-bone" of commerce—provided with fringes through which he sorts the mysterious substance known as "brit" upon which he feeds. It is the sperm whale which provides the teeth which, when appropriately decorated with tattooed designs, are a very favourite nautical curiosity.

The whale fishery, unlike the seal fishery, continues, but its head-quarters are now in the Queen Charlotte Islands. Stefansson's ship, the "Karluk," was originally a whaler, and I saw some of her old brass guns and harpoons when she was fitting out at Esquimalt.

I once had a queer little experience on board one of the whaling steamers. It was Dominion Day or something of the kind, and the Outer Wharf lay baking in the sun, quite deserted. The little steamer seemed quite deserted too, and for sheer idleness I ascended her gang-plank and went aboard. There seemed no one about, though there was a fire burning in the cook's galley; but when I stood on her little bridge I became aware of a voice calling insistently something I could not make out. It was a queer voice, and the language sounded like nothing I had ever heard. I followed it to the saloon, opened a cabin door, and there on the

captain's double bed was a green parrot in a cage, gabbling away at the top of its voice all the nautical endearments it knew !

\* \* \* \* \*

They were talking of improving the Outer Wharf at Victoria when I was last there ; indeed, they had begun to build a pretentious breakwater and concrete piers which, so far as I could make out, nobody wanted in the least.

I hope they have not improved it—or, if they have done, I hope that at least they have left the old piers with the piles upon which *teredo navalis* had been so busy that one always felt a delightful uncertainty whether the next Blue Funnel liner that chanced along might not give it an extra nudge and send the whole thing galley-west.

I hope the water still goes singing through them tide by tide, and that the planking still gives through its interstices those green glimpses of jade-coloured water beneath. I hope there is still that sound as of the feet of ghostly sailormen along the wharves, and voices talking away in strange tongues, and that the gulls still mew and pipe and sit in long rows upon the sheds as they used to do. I hope the old sheds still hold their old mixed smell of nitrates and whale oil and Chinese bales . . . and that the Chinese firemen still play fan-tan in the evenings, squatting on their heels on the forecastle head of the Blue Funnel liner. . . . I hope these things have not changed ; for it is one of the bitter things of life to find a place changed that has shared your dreams.

I think I will go again, one of these days, and

see. . . . It may be I shall still find ships at the lumber mill, though not the ships I knew. It may be that still, at high noon in some street of Chinatown, when the shadow lies on the white-hot pavement in dark pools, in some dusk room with a dwarf tree in a blue-and-white pot in the window they still play the same little tune on a two-stringed fiddle of China : a little tune of a few notes that seems to have neither end nor beginning—dropping like a thin thread of silver into the hot gold of the afternoon. . . .



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